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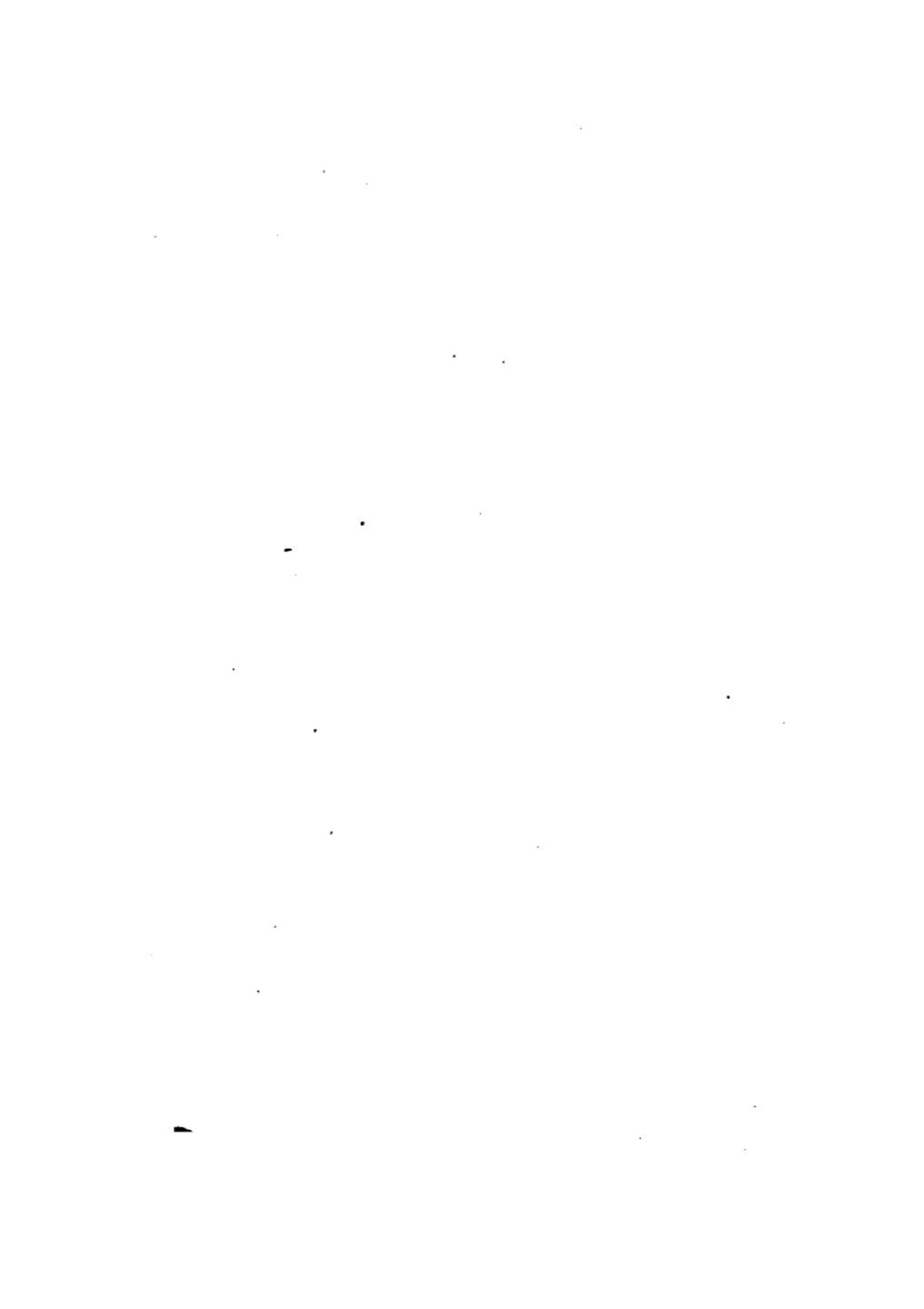
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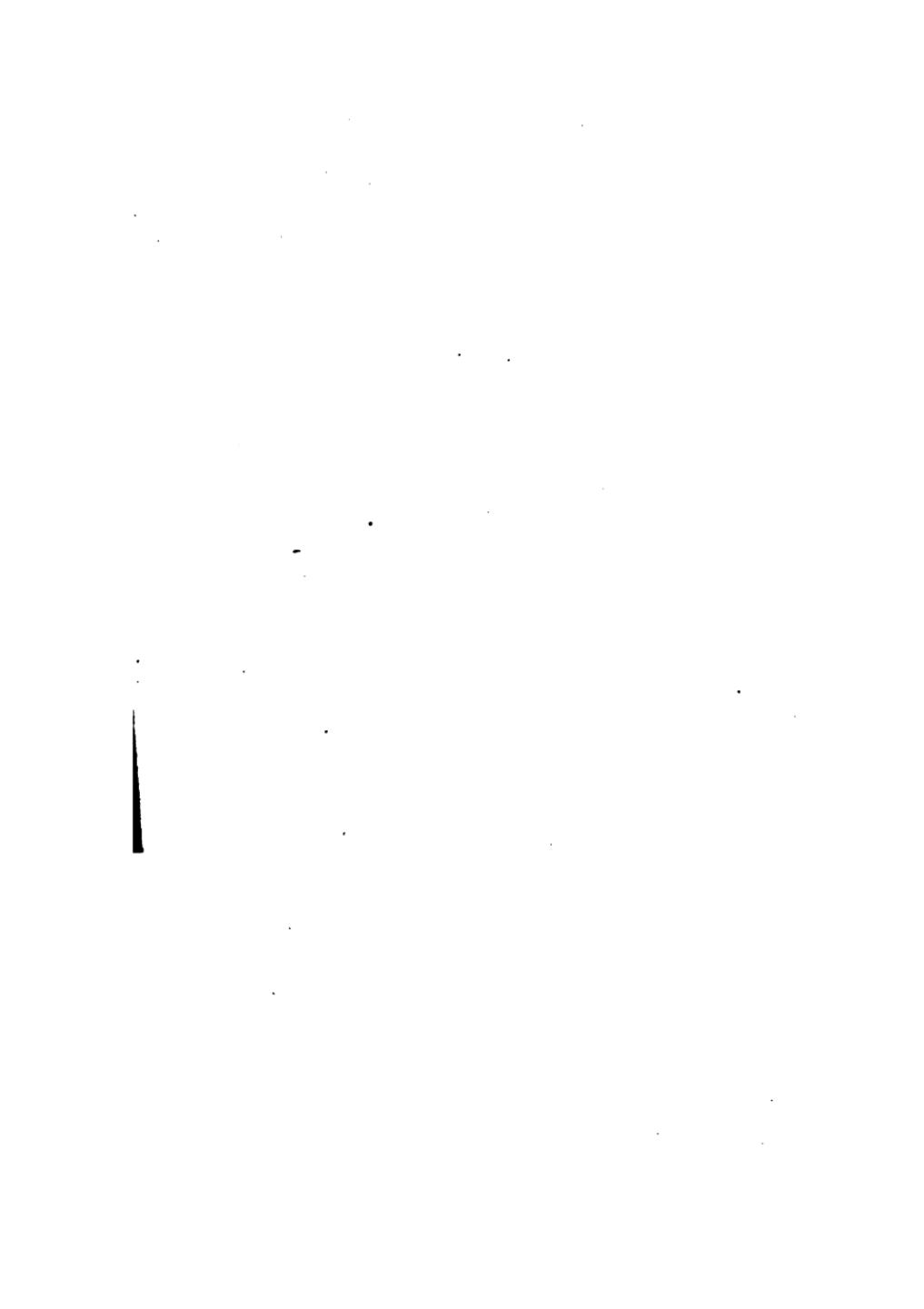
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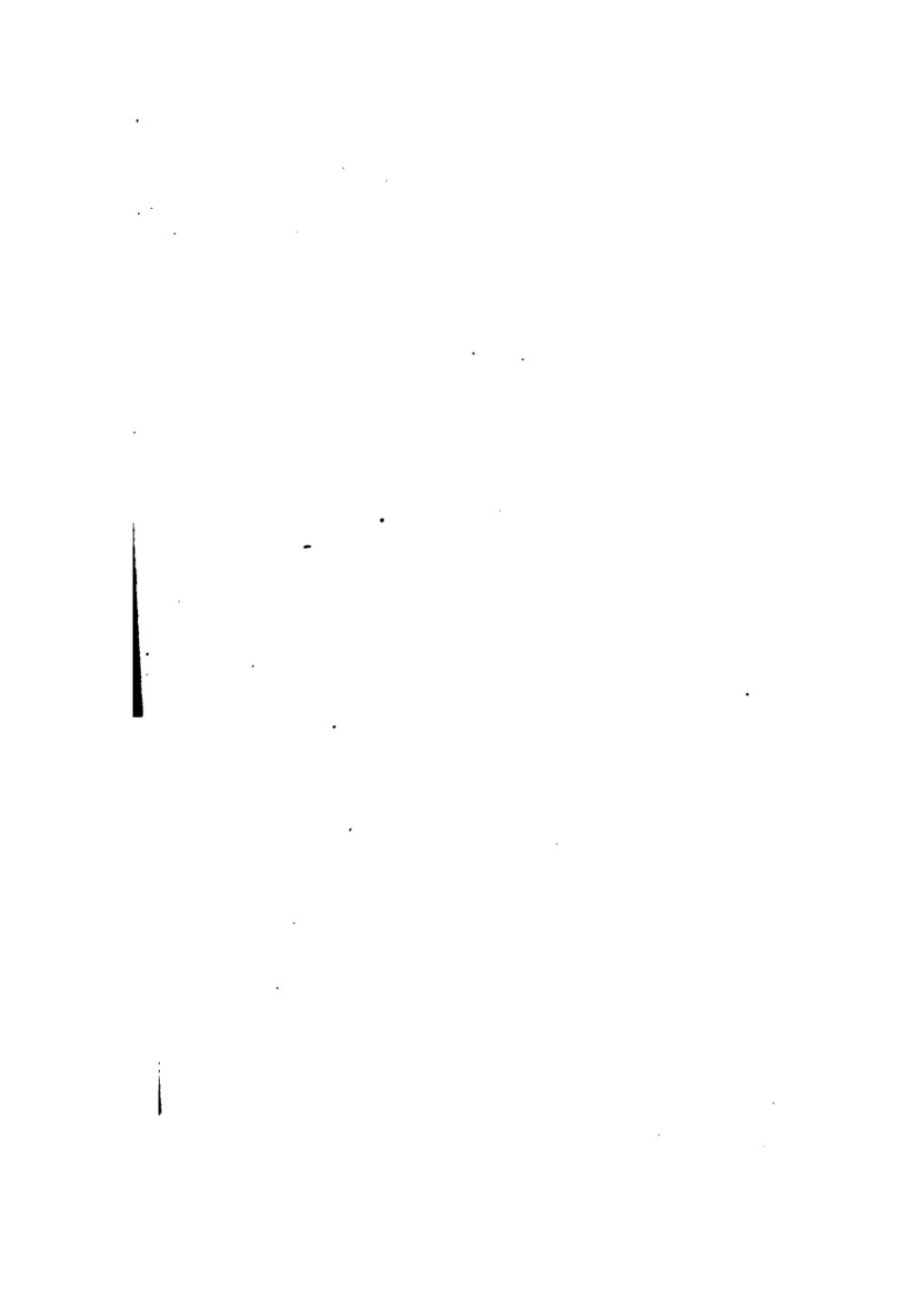




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G I V E B R E A D,
G A I N L O V E.

BY ELIZA METEYARD,
(*Silbergen*),

AUTHOR OF "THE DOCTOR'S LITTLE DAUGHTER," "LILIAN'S GOLDEN
HOURS," ETC.



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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I. THE HEAVY-LADEN PANNIERS	5
CHAPTER II. MISS CASSANDRA	24
CHAPTER III. THE TWO LISBETHS	35
CHAPTER IV. THE DISCOVERY AT SCHOOL	52
CHAPTER V. A GRIM VISITOR	69
CHAPTER VI. THE ANCIENT LADIES	80
CHAPTER VII. TROUBLES FOR LITTLE JANE	90

	PAGB
CHAPTER VIII.	
A POTTERY TOWN	104
CHAPTER IX.	
FAR AWAY	121
CHAPTER X.	
IN TIME LITTLE—IN JOY GREAT	130
CHAPTER XI.	
FRUIT	150
CHAPTER XII.	
A MIRROR OF TIME	176

GIVE BREAD, GAIN LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE HEAVY-LADEN PANNIERS.

THOUGH these wild and solitary hills were in winter time almost always covered deep with snow, yet in summer they were both lovely and pleasant. Cool breezes blew across their heights, the sward was crisp and dry, the dark clumps of bushes scattered here and there were thickly covered with luscious bilberries, and millions of pretty harebells swayed lightly to and fro on their thread-like stems.

For more than a week not a human foot had crossed these hills; but now, whilst the July afternoon was at its hottest, a speck upon the far-away blue sky grew bigger and bigger; and soon came slowly on, a poor donkey, heavily laden with two large wicker panniers, in which was piled a great load of coarse pottery. There

were yellow dishes and brown pans, and blue jugs, tied by string to the wicker-work ; whilst between the panniers stood a set of deep crocks, such as those in which housewives make bread. An old woman, dressed in a man's coat and a rusty black bonnet, stalked behind ; a short pipe in her mouth, and a thick stick in her hand, which, whenever poor old Smoke, the donkey, slackened foot, or stayed to nibble some way-side thorn, or a few blades of tempting grass, she used with cruel ferocity. Indeed his whole back was bare, from hard usage and galling loads ; and yet he was such a patient, docile creature, that any one less cruel and ignorant than this old woman would have softened his lot by kindly treatment.

By and by, however, she stopped abruptly, turned round, and shading her face with her hand, looked far in the direction whence she had come. When she saw what her eye sought, she called out with a loud and angry voice—

“ Come ! thou'dst better come on, or I'll gi'e thee the stick once again.”

Thus summoned, the distant object the old woman's eye had lighted upon, came nearer ; and as it thus grew distinct, it was seen to be a

little girl of about seven years old, shoeless, and clad in a miserable frock and tippet. She had a bonnet, for it dangled from one of the panniers; and she had shoes, for they were thrust in a jug; but she had been suffered to wear neither, since two days before they had begun to cross these lonely hills. She had a pretty face, though it was very dirty: her eyes were large, though red and swollen from many tears; and her timid hesitating step, as she came nearer, showed in what dread she held this bad old woman.

“What’s thee keeping behind for, killing thyself wi’ bilberries, though I told thee not?”

“I ain’t had none,” said the little girl, shrinking from the hand thrust forth to clutch her.

“Thou’rt as big a storyteller as thou’rt a plague; and old John won’t talk me into bringing thee again on th’ tramp.”

“I’d rather be at home, Granny,” replied the child.

“Ay, I dus’ say, to be plotting mischief wi’ th’ lad, and keep him idle whilst the master be busy. But come thee on—thee’re nayther good at home nor abroad.”

“Granny,” said the child, hesitatingly, as the

old woman with a blow urged poor Smoke forward, "I'll be good and keep nigh, if thou'l rest a bit, and gi' me some bread."

"What!" replied the old woman, still more angrily, "thou'd ha' me throw the pots i' th' bush, and let thee ride Smoke, eh? And thou'd ha' victuals, though I ain't sold dish or mug these two days! thou'rt a pretty one; thou'd bread i' the morn, and thou'l ha' bread at night when we've crossed the hill; but not a scrap till then, and thee may cry thy eyes dry if thee lik'st." So saying she shook her hand at the child, gave Smoke a fresh blow or two, and went onwards. But presently she stopped again, and called out, "Where's the dog?"

Perhaps it was that the child did not hear, for she made no answer, but stood still in the place the old woman had left her.

"Come! thee'd better come on, or it shall be the worse for thee. Where's the dog?"

"Pincher's after the rabbits, Granny."

The old woman whistled, and soon there came bounding from the far distance a poor-looking sort of cur, but sprightly and kindly eyed. He whisked and frisked round the little company, and then lying down and stretching out his paws,

he laid his nose there, as though for a fresh gambol ; but the old woman was in no humour to see prettiness of behaviour in either dog or child, so she thumped her stick again, and all went onwards in the burning sun.

So on, for at least two hours they went, across the silent waste of the mountain summit ; nothing of life being seen but some flapping raven, or blue-winged butterfly. Never once would she give rest to child or beast ; never once would she let poor old Smoke stay to drink, though he gave such signs of thirst, and the springs which trickled through the fern and moss were so many and so clear ; but on and on she went with stony indifference.

But now, as the mountain side became plainly visible, and vast masses of limestone rock, varied by stunted trees and by clumps of bilberry-bushes, broke the steep descent, she stopped suddenly, dropped her stick, and held her hand to her side. When she had stood thus some minutes, she staggered feebly forward for a few paces, and then sank down beside some pretty lichen-covered rocks, which just there lent their kindly shadow. The donkey, missing her accustomed step behind, stood still a few paces off, and the little

child stood away till summoned by her feeble croak.

“Jenny, Jenny,” she said—for the little girl’s name was Jane—“I dunna know what ails me; but I be mighty bad. Get me—get me the little bottle—it be under the big pie-dish, in the left pannier.”

The child knew, to her cost, that the little bottle was a very wicked one; for the old woman was always so vicious and cross-grained after tasting what it held. Yet she dare not disobey, though she was always wishing that it would fly away on wings: so going to the pannier she sought it out, and came back with it quickly. The old woman did not seem to have power to grasp it, so kneeling down, the child placed it by her hand.

“I be very bad,” groaned the old woman again, “so we mun stop a bit. Thou mun unload the ass, and light the fire, and—”

She said no more, but dropping her cheek heavily on the ground, closed her eyes and lay like one asleep. The child thought she was; so after watching her with a serious countenance for some minutes, she proceeded to her nightly task of unloading poor Smoke. Directly he

heard her light step, he pricked up his ears ; directly he felt her little hands upon his neck, he knew he was going to be unloaded ; and whether it was that the day had been so hot, or the road steep and long, and he was very weary, but he rubbed his poor old nose up and down her shoulder with more than usual tenderness. The poor old fellow was very grateful, as all dumb creatures are when little children use them kindly.

Carefully as she had been taught by many a thump and cruel word, she took out each article from the panniers, and set it under the shadow of the great stones ; then she loosened the girths, and took off the panniers themselves ; and poor old Smoke, thus free, forgot all else for the time. He whisked and frisked about as though mad ; he rolled himself over and over on the lovely sward ; and finally he trotted off to the nearest spring, there to slake his fevered thirst, and stand in the cool waters.

Thus left to herself, the little girl, dreading the awakening of her cruel mistress, hastened to gather withered leaves and fern for a fire, and then filling a little old kettle which had hung dangling to the panniers, she set it thereon. When it boiled, and the little tin teapot and the

cups and saucers were placed, she approached the old woman on tiptoe.

“Granny,” she whispered, “the kettle boils.” But no reply came. “Granny,” she said again, “I’m very hungry! May I have a bit o’ bread?” but still the old woman made no answer. Fear-
ing to awaken her if she slept, she crept away, and presently stole a little piece of bread. Oh! such a little piece, for she did not dare to take much lest she should be found out, and then she knew she should be starved through the whole of the morrow. Even this she ran behind the great stones to eat, and thus we see how evil of one kind begets another, and how cruelty is the parent of deceit and lies.

Though very weary, and her hunger greater, as it seemed, than ever, she lay down beside the little fire and cried herself to sleep; and when by and by old Pincher, the dog, returned from a fresh rabbit hunt, and awakened her by his whines and caresses, the sun was gone, and the blue sky was full of stars. Terrified beyond expression, she jumped up and looked around her. The old woman still lay stretched upon the ground; she had moved neither head nor limb, and the moon-
light lay as a pall upon her.

Her fear lost in her greater terror, the poor little child hurried to the old woman's side and called again. But no answer coming—no more than it had done before—little Jane knelt over her, and saw by the starlight that she had never moved or stirred since she had last spoken, nor had she touched the wicked bottle, though it lay so close beside her hand. More terrified still, the child touched her face, and drew back her fingers with a cry of pain, as she felt how cold it was. Her old Granny was not merely sleeping, she must be dead! She would never scold or beat her any more. This was quite true, the old woman had been dead some hours; she had died as her last words to the child had left her lips!

Little Jane's first sense was that of relief, the next that of a still more terrible terror than she had ever known before. To be out on this lonely mountain-top with not a human creature near! to be in companionship with death and knew not what it was! for though the little child had been told that people died, she had never seen death in any of its forms except among the lower animals; and then by the rude and cruel people by whom she had been reared it had been a subject for jest and contumely. She had not learnt that death,

being one of God's ordinances, is a subject for faith as well as reverence.

The child had a tender heart; so, forgetting cruel usage, she cleaved to the insentient corpse in an agony of grief. She kissed the face again and again; she strove to make the clay-cold hands warm once more; she spoke loving words; but all in vain.

"Granny, granny," she said, whilst she wept bitterly, "I'll never be bad again. I won't ask for bread; I'll walk all to-morrow, and won't say I'm tired; and I won't tell Ben when I get home, as I said I would, if thou'l speak!" But no answer came; and incomprehensible as it was, she began to understand that the dead do not speak. Then her terror growing anew, as she became conscious that she was thus alone, she ran wildly up and down, calling for help which could not come. Then she climbed the great stones, and strove to look away into the valley below, but the starlight was too fitful for much to be seen, except what seemed an old gray church-tower; and when at last she crept back to the soft sward, she called the dog and donkey to her for companionship' sake. Pincher was not far off, for he always slept, even when at home, beside

the piles of crockery ; and the donkey loved the little child's voice too well not to come at her lightest bidding. Each in its way tried to convince her of its love ; and as though conscious that something was amiss, with more than wonted demonstration. Old Pinchor licked her face and hands ; Smoke rubbed his nose upon her shoulder, and kept patiently near ; till, touched by this dumb sympathy, she cleaved to both. Thus we see that love and gentleness beget their likeness ; even if we seek not the higher principle—that He who gives us the dumb creatures for our service, commands us also to be generous masters.

As her terror lessened, her hunger grew anew. She got what food there was, and ate ravenously till satiety came, though sharing her meal with her dumb company. Then lying down beside the panniers, with Pincher at her feet, she fell into a long deep slumber, which lasted many hours.

When she awoke the sun was shining brightly, and the wild bees were flitting round the broad patches of mountain thyme. She jumped up, and seeing what lay so close beside her, all the sorrow, if not all the terror, of the past night was hers. Something in her heart told her that she ought to cover up her old Granny, so she

put a tattered cloak over her ; and then climbing the great gray stones, looked once more away into the valley below. There lay a village at a considerable distance, whilst the hill-side towards it was very steep indeed ; but having sense enough to judge that she must go thither or else stay and die like her Granny, she descended ; bid Pincher mind the crocks, and leaving the donkey grazing quietly, as she supposed, she put on her shoes and bonnet, and set off at once down the slippery turf behind the great stones. She had hard work to keep her feet, which she only did by catching at a bush here, and putting her foot on a stone there ; and when at last she sat down to rest beside a clump of fern, she was astonished to hear something coming pit-pat, pit-pat, after her. Rising, and looking up, she saw it was old Smoke. But he would not go back, do all she could ; and as the hill was far too steep for her to re-ascend, she was obliged to let him follow her, which he did very diligently. Her way downwards soon brought her to a part where the rocks were both broken and precipitous ; and where, in trying to slide down, she fell far, and so heavily, as to lay stunned for many minutes on the sward beneath.

When she began slowly to recover, she was conscious that she was surrounded by quite a little crowd of human faces ; that many hands touched her ; and that voices spoke in a whisper. When she could sit upright, and some kindly little hand had wiped the blood off her mouth—for in her fall both her mouth and nose had been hurt—she saw that her new friends were children, who taking probably the opportunity of an afternoon's holiday, had come up the mountain to gather bilberries. There were about two dozen in all, and the larger part were boys, who, unlike the little girls, hung sheepishly back, as though afraid.

As soon as little Jane's story was told, all the boys except two, and three or four of the oldest girls, after whispering amongst themselves, ran off to climb the hill, leaving the little stranger to do as she pleased.

“I must get help for Granny,” she said, as after several vain attempts—for she was sick and giddy—she kept her feet, and began to move onwards : “if I ask in the village, perhaps somebody will go up the hill and be good to her.”

“The boys have gone,” replied the children, in a breath.

"But my father 'll go," said a pretty little voice, "and mother 'll give you some tea and wash your face. Come on, I'll take you; my name is Angelina." So saying a pretty little girl, with a face as fair as her name, took the stranger's hand softly and led her on. The rest forgot their bilberries and followed, for their hearts were very sorry.

"Brother Oliver will take the cart, and go round by the road," said the younger of the two boys who remained, for like Angelina he had a kind heart, and great sympathy for the sorrowful little stranger. He took her hand likewise, and thus between such good friends, little Jane had nothing to fear.

The other boy was very rude and vicious. He had evidently lingered behind in order to ride and torment the poor ass; for pulling some rope out of his pocket, he made a halter, put it over Smoke's neck, and jumping on his back, urged the poor creature down the steep hill-side. Though repeatedly called to—he minded nothing that was said; and not till the bigger girls said they would tell his father, would he go sufficiently slow to keep within sight of the little company.

After much weary walking, they gained the

foot of the mountain ; then crossed a deep wood, and from thence reached a shady lane, watered on one side by a little purling rivulet. Here the vicious boy, whose name was Dick, finding the road easy, urged on the poor ass still more cruelly ; and presently, to make him go faster, he tore a long bramble from the hedge, and doubling it, began to beat him in spite of the children's cries.

"Oh ! please don't," wept little Jane, breathless with the pace she had to run, "nobody was cruel to old Smoke but Granny. He didn't mind her stick, he was used to it. But he'll bear nothing else, he won't indeed. He'll throw you, he'll sure to do it!"

Almost as she spoke, the child's words came true, for struck cruelly about his ears, the ass bounded forwards towards a gate leading into a field of ripening corn. It had unfortunately been left ajar ; so opening with the shock, the ass rushed in, and trampling down the wheat, threw the boy amidst it. At this unlucky moment, and whilst the children were calling the donkey back—for he had already made a deep pathway in the corn—a rough-looking man rode up on a pony.

“ Hallo, hallo ! what’s this !” he shouted, with a loud and angry voice. He then dismounted, cracked his whip, and went into the field, where stood the children and the delinquent ass ; for the cowardly urchin had no sooner heard the voice and knew it to be that of Mr. Hardthorn the steward, than he had bobbed down amidst the corn and crawled quickly out of sight.

The children explained the matter, and little Jane with bitter sobs pleaded old Smoke’s innocence ; but the hard and angry man would not listen.

“ There, I won’t hear any of it. Tramps and their cattle in the lane as usual, and, what’s worse, the village children helping in their trespass. My misseses shall know of this, and the donkey go to the pound.” Speaking thus the angry steward cracked his whip again, drove the ass into the lane, mounted his pony, and rode on towards the village. Just at its outskirts, shaded by trees and filled with nettles and brickbats, stood the pound. Unlocking the high gate with a key from his pocket, Mr. Hardthorn drove the donkey in, relocked it, and rode away, when he had threatened to see old Timothy Slow the schoolmaster that very night, so that they had

all a "swingeing task" on the morrow. Most of the children cried, and as to little Jane, none of them could comfort her. She beat her hands upon the gate, and when old Smoke came and looked wistfully through the bars, her grief was redoubled. She was all alone now; she was indeed! she had not a friend, she thought, in all the world; but when she felt Angelina's little tender hand, and heard her pretty lisping "Don't ki-pe'ase—don't!" one little honey-drop of comfort sweetened this extreme bitterness. Thus out of our sorrows, our joys are born.

Whilst this was the children's sorrow, and whilst the elder ones were solacing old Smoke with handfuls of juicy grass, and drops of cool water, conveyed to him through the bars of the gate in their tiny palms—a farmer-like looking young man, with a hayrake on his shoulder, came towards them from the village. He was at once surrounded, and little Jane's history, and the misadventures of poor Smoke met his ear.

The young man's was a grave and sorrow-stricken face already, and it grew graver as he listened.

"It is a sad thing," he said, "to die thus far away from all human aid, if indeed this poor

soul be really dead. But the cart's already in the fields by the hill, so I'll take it and the boys round by the road and see. Meanwhile this poor little one must be housed." And he laid his hand with the tenderness of a good man upon her head.

"Pe'ase," lisped Angelina, "she'll go with me to mother."

"She can go home wi' me, Oliver," said the little lad, who was the young man's brother.

"Nay, both places are too far, for she looks starved and tired. No! lead her to Mrs. Roden's; tell her what has happened, and she'll give her a few hours' shelter I'm sure."

"But can't Smoke come?" sobbed little Jane, her sorrow breaking out afresh.

The young man's face darkened. "No! not yet. You must have patience, little one. Hard-thorn the steward put him in, and I cannot interfere. But on my way towards the hill, I pass the cottage where Dick's father lives, and I'll speak to him, and may be he can get the ass released. Now go on—the children will show you where Mrs. Roden lives." So saying Oliver Shelve hastened on his way towards the hills.

When Reuben and the elder girls had promised to stay yet a while by the pound, and keep watch as it were over Smoke's safety, the forlorn child and her little friends went onwards to the village. By the way they stopped to show her their schoolhouse—an ancient thatched building—in front of which flowed the brook with its little ford and stepping-stones. They then reached the village—a poor-looking place of scattered farms and cottages, though beautifully situated amidst trees and brooks and hills. The thatch on most of the cottages was decayed ; the garden and orchard palings were nearly all in ruin. But the church was ivy-covered and ancient, and the churchyard, with the parsonage at the rear, a lovely spot. Opposite to these, with a great grass-plot and some walnut-trees in front, stood a timbered cottage of better aspect than the rest. Towards this the children went, and standing on the door-step when they reached it, they looked down into an ancient kitchen.

“If you pe'ase, Mrs. Roden,” said Angelina, “I've brought you little Jane.”

Mrs. Roden, who was a comely old lady, rose from her tea-table, put on her spectacles, and came towards the door.

"Dear Lord," she said, pathetically, as her eye fell on little Jane, "who is it Thou hast thus sent me?" With this she led the children in.

CHAPTER II.

MISS CASSANDRA.

AT about four miles from the village where Mrs. Roden lived was a vast old park, in which stood an ancient timbered hall, built many centuries before. It was inhabited by two old maiden ladies of the name of Butler, who were very rich and very miserly; and with whom Cassandra Briggle, Mrs. Roden's daughter-in-law, had lived many years as maid and housekeeper. "Cassy," as her mistresses called her, was a pinched-up old maid of from forty-eight to fifty years old; and such a mere slave to her ladies' will, simply for the sake of a handsome legacy when they died, that veritably, as many people said, she would have laid down her body to serve as their mat or hassock, had they but held up a finger. Like her mistresses, she was very parsimonious, and this for her own sake, for she hoped by the time of their death to have saved up a good sum,

so that with that and other expectancies, she might be a prize rich enough for the hand of Mr. Hardthorn, the steward, who was a childless widower, and well to do. Not that he had ever given her the least idea that he would like her for a wife, for he was a cold and calculating man ; but hope in the heart of Miss Cassandra was everything.

About four evenings after that pleasant afternoon on which little Jane had stopped down into Mrs. Roden's hospitable kitchen, Miss Cassandra sat at needlework by the light of a thin dip-candle. One of her mistresses' remotely antique dresses was undergoing such alteration as would make it wearable for herself—for Miss Cassandra rarely bought anything new—when just as her scissors were freshly shaping the sleeves, a tap was heard, the door was opened, and the steward entered. After the ordinary inquiries, he sat down, and Miss Cassandra politely asked if he would have a little beer.

Mr. Hardthorn, who had had many convincing proofs that Miss Cassandra's beer was both sour and weak, said concisely, "No."

"Well, then," was the insinuating rejoinder, "if not beer, a little drop of good wine ! Do !

I have a little bottle of delicious Tent, our dear ladies gave me when I last had a cold!" As Mr. Hardthorn did not repeat his negative, Miss Cassy rose, and unlocking one of her great housekeeping closets, produced the wine, gave the steward a glassful, and resumed her seat.

"Well!" he said presently, "I suppose you've heard all the to-do there's been in the village."

"No," she replied, "I'm never curious. Other people's affairs may go ill or well for me. Suke, our dairymaid, said something about an old woman being found dead on the hills; this is all I know, or care to know."

"Perhaps not," he said, drily, as he fixed his gaze upon her thin visage, "for she sold crocks, and came out of Staffordshire."

"That can be nothing to me," she replied, colouring slightly as she affected to resume her work, "though mother-in-law's son chose to go there, and become a potter's designer, and a spendthrift as well, it's nothing to me."

Still he watched her, and went on speaking as though she had not replied.

"There was a child with her, a mite of a thing of about seven years old. That fellow, Oliver Shelve, who is always busying himself with

people's affairs, just to get a good word from the parson, or thy mother-in-law, or that deaf old woman, Miss Downton, went up the hill and fetched down the body and the crocks. The last were put in the barn, by the church, and yesterday the coroner sat on the body, and returned a verdict, 'Died by the visitation of God.' Mr. Helsby, the parson, being away, why of course the curate had to do everything. The parish found a coffin, which is to remain open till tomorrow afternoon, when the body will be buried. So if thou'rt as anxious, Miss Cassy, as thy neighbours, there's yet time for thee to see the dead."

"Not I," she said, "for since Miss Catherine has become so infirm I rarely leave home, even to see mother-in-law, or to go to church, but on Sunday read the service to my mistresses instead." She paused a moment, and then added, hesitatingly but eagerly, "What was the old woman's name, and where did she come from?"

"It's not known; the child says she was called Old Nan, and people suppose she came from the Staffordshire moorlands."

"Indeed! Was nothing to lead to identity found upon her?"

"Not a thing. A tobacco-box, a few coppers, and a key, were all her pockets held." The steward hesitated for a moment, and then he added in a confidential whisper, "But I can show you something if you'll say nothing!"

Dropping her needle, bending her head eagerly forwards, Miss Cassandra's reply was made by looks, not words. Thus seeing the curiosity he had evoked, the steward brought a little white-handled clasp-knife from his pocket, and laid it on the table.

"If you look closely," he said, "you'll see 'W. R.' engraved on the handle. They were the initials, I suppose, of the owner's name. But say nothing, one of the lads picked it up close by the body, and I gave a sixpenny piece for it."

But before he had said half these words, the woman had risen, in order to conceal her ghastly agitation; and going to the lattice casement, affected to look out upon the night. When she came back she was calmer.

"I thought I heard a noise outside. Well! I suppose the worth of such an article is little enough to any one."

He understood her meaning; but he was too cautious to evince his knowledge. "If it is any

use to you, pray keep it. Now as to the child, where do you think it is?"

"I don't know, and I care as little. Perhaps the old deaf woman has been as bountiful as usual."

"Nay, she and those around her are but poor. Think again. What wilt thou say to thy mother-in-law taking in the little wench, and being a Samaritan to her? It is all the village talk that she is wonderfully struck with her face. She's begged some second-hand clothes for her, till t' others can be got, made her up a bed in her own chamber, and been settling wi' Timothy Slow and his missis about her going to school on Monday morning."

Every word the steward had uttered had caused Miss Cassy's wrath to grow. Now it exploded.

"I wonder mother-in-law dare do this. Last year, when I got rid of that Trounce's child she'd taken on the pretence that she felt lonely, and wanted a little help in fetching water from the brook, going to th' shop, and t'other things, I told her pretty plain I'd have no more of it. Now this is worse still, taking in a tramp's child, that nobody knows nothing of. Somebody's

been setting her on to do as much, I am sure of it."

Mr. Hardthorn whistled a low note, finished off his glass of Tent, looked significantly, but said nothing.

"What is it?" asked Miss Cassandra, in a voice of deep anger. "Come, Moses Hardthorn, we're servants to the same mistresses, so tell me."

"Well, it must go no further. Lay your finger on the Downtons' shop, and you have it. The morning after the little wench came, and she'd been washed, and dressed in one of Angelina Hill's frocks, thy mother-in-law took her to the shop. Peggy Smith, who was in there buying some calico, heard a deal o' talk from that grand parlour o' theirs, and old Lisbeth Downton say to thy mother-in-law, 'I would be firm, Mrs. Roden, I would indeed. You've only done your Christian duty in taking this little one in for a few hours' shelter. If presently no one should claim her, if she show herself dutiful and affectionate, and her rude manners and coarse speech grow gentler, I would not limit my desire to retain her by fear of a person like Miss Cassandra, who would make others as much a slave

to her as she is one to her miserly old mistresses. If you be firm, Mrs. Roden, against these harsh and unwarrantable interferences with your comfort and liberty of action, the evil will cure itself; for from want of this firmness, it appears to me, your troubles have chiefly come.' 'They have—they have indeed,' wept thy mother-in-law. 'If I'd stood firm against her from the first, my poor dear lad would never have been driven from his home. My poor Will—my poor boy—where art thou?—am I never to see thee again?' Then when her tears were dry, she kept saying the little wench was like her boy: that as the child first stood on 'her door-step the look of her keen eyes turned her heart over and over; and this was why, if the child did well, she should like to keep her.' And the old deaf woman's answer was, 'Be firm, Mrs. Roden.' "

Miss Cassandra's wrath was so intense, that when she tried to speak, her words would scarce leave her lips. "Firm or not," she stuttered, "mother-in-law *shall* not keep her. My father's name was Richard Briggle; my mother's name was Susan Smith; and the money this woman Jane Roden lives upon was theirs. She was my father's second wife; and after his death, she

married a man named Roden, who left her nothing ; and thus I can't see what right she has to support just whom she likes on my father's money. But I will wait a few weeks before I go down and give this trumper's child the route, just to try how far the old woman *will* dare to go without consulting *me*. Meanwhile, she shall have neither butter, nor eggs, nor any of the things I am used to help her with."

"Well," said Mr. Hardthorn, as he pushed back the wine-glass and rose from his chair, "the old lady won't care, I dare say, for she's a sparing cre'tur, and must have a nest-egg laid up somewhere, or she wouldn't ha' been so ready to help to get the trumper's donkey from the pound. It had trampled down the corn, and I laid the damage at five shillings, thinking no one would pay, and I would take the beast. But the village folks raised the money among themselves ; the ass was released this very morn ; and the children be making as much fuss as though the cre'tur were something uncommon. But this is the way I'm set against by that old Miss Downton, Oliver Shelve, and a few more like 'em."

He was going now, for his hand was on the door, when Miss Cassy said, as though indif-

ferently: "How do you get on about that land at the back of the school?"

"Not at all. Young Shelve won't part wi't. He says it's been his father's many and many a year; and he'll work night as well as day to keep it from going. I've told him our ladies may be calling in the money they lent upon it; but he won't hearken. But if they would—I think I could tackle it."

"The old ladies would not like to harm Oliver, I'm sure. For his father and grandfather were favourites with their father the Squire. But of what use would the land be? It seems to me a hilly, ferny place—more like a moor than a field."

The steward faltered beneath the woman's acute gaze. "Not much use, I dare say; but if the old ladies would be persuaded to make it theirs, why I'd hire it of 'em—or buy it rather—and build a house, say, where perhaps I might add another to my family. But this latter matter depends, of course, on getting the land." With this significant hint, made whilst he squeezed Miss Cassy's hand, he said "good night," and went.

"There's more in this than I can see," she

said to herself, as she came slowly back to her seat and her needlework. "There's something of value connected with that bit of land, or Hardthorn would not covet it as he does. Well, I'll try and find out; and if I can get it for him I will. It may lead him to make his hint good." She then resumed her needlework, and continued it till a distant bell rung.

At its signal, she opened her door and crossed a great hall; its oak ceiling, and its ancient pictures only lighted by the moon, which shone through the high lattice windows. In a very large parlour, at the end of this hall, sat two very aged gentlewomen; and before them she presented herself with incredible deference. A screen partly surrounded the spot where they sat; and on the small spider-legged table which stood between them, was a single candle. Both ladies occupied quaint high-backed easy-chairs; and whilst the one read what seemed the county newspaper, the other fumbled, with closed eyes, over some coarse knitting.

"Cassy," said the lady who had been reading, and who, though the elder, was by far the less decrepit, "candles, I see, are dearer by a half-penny a pound."

"Indeed, my lady! I heard it was likely to be so last week; so I burn a dip in the house-keeper's room, and have given out one less for the kitchen."

"Very good, Cassy. Now as to meat; as it is likely to be so dear this winter, cannot we make some little alteration?"

"Certainly, my lady. John and Roger can have only bread and cider for breakfast; and we can make the fat bacon serve the kitchen dinner for four days a-week instead of two."

"We must be very economical, Cassy. Now let us have supper. I will have a roasted apple and some milk: Miss Isabella, her arrowroot." The servant humbly curtsied and retired.

"Sister, Cassy is an invaluable creature!" said Catherine. But Miss Isabella did not answer, but went on mechanically with her dull knitting.

CHAPTER III.

THE TWO LISBETHS.

Not only did the sweet sunlight shine full into Mrs. Roden's kitchen through the open door, but a blessed hush and peace reigned there also,

on this Sabbath afternoon. The ferny odour from the lawn stole in, on the light wind, and the shadow of the great walnut-trees overhead tempered the radiant light ; and thus it was in all things a Divine day.

Seated on the door-step, little Jane quietly awaited her good friend. Mrs. Roden had made her a little black frock from one of her own gowns ; a black silk cape from some ancient scarf ; and laid a piece of crape across the cheap straw bonnet she had bought the little maid at Mrs. Downton's shop. Now pinning her own shawl, taking up her large prayer-book, hobbling up the steps, and locking the door, she gathered little Jane's small hand within her own, and they went on together.

“ I hope, child,” she said softly, as they thus passed under the sweet shadow of the boughs, and again repeating words often spoken that day, “ that you will behave well in God's house. You must not talk, or look about you, after the service is once begun, but hearken attentively to the good clergyman.”

The little child looked up into Mrs. Roden's face, and said, as softly, “ I will.”

“ And when your old Granny is brought out,

after church, to be buried, we shall stand by as mourners ; and you must be as good there as in the church."

" But I shan't cry."

" With respect to that you must be guided by your own feeling, Jane. Only you must understand this, that it is wicked to nurse the memory of evil ; and if the old woman was both ignorant and cruel, we may think of her with pity, but not with hate. If little Jane is to stay with me and win my heart, as her face won my old eyes, she mustn't speak cruelly of her dead Granny."

" But she was not my Granny, Ben told me ; and she always beat and clemmed (starved) me."

" Was she never kind ? Did she never kiss you ?"

" Once when I lay very bad she did, that's all."

" Well ! for the sake of that once we'll speak softly of her, or at least not spcak at all. For where we can speak only harshly, it is often best not to speak at all."

With these little precepts towards charity, the old gentlewoman and the child went down the path, crossed the road, and entered the church-yard. It was a sweet, still spot ; large, undu-

lating, very green, made shady by some fine old cedar-trees; and the old red-stone church was literally embowered in ivy. Within it was cool and shadowy; a dim, and in places a tinted light, fell on the silent floor; and there was a great and holy hush above and around. This was very pleasant to the quiet heart and listening ear; and nothing broke it, but the rustle of the summer leaves outside, or soft footsteps as they came up the aisle.

When Mrs. Roden had entered her pew, and knelt and said her prayers, and made the little child kneel too and say one after her, they rose, and little Jane was permitted to stand upon the seat. Then such of the congregation as had already arrived whispered softly to each other, or thought, with varying opinions in their own hearts, "Now she is clean and dressed, the little stranger is a pretty child. Mrs. Roden looks kindly at her; but what will Miss Cassandra say? Will there not be fresh quarrels? and is Mrs. Roden quite so prudent as she should be in thus taking in, and making her companion, a tramp's child of whom she knows nothing? Is she not childish herself? and may she not regret her charity?"

Thus the prudent reasoned with themselves. They read of mercy to the stranger in their Bibles; but their thoughts did not think it, nor their deeds fulfil the precept. This is all the difference between words and work.

In the pew next to Mrs. Roden's were two, who took her hand warmly, and who looked kindly at little Jane. One was a middle-aged woman—very short in stature, plain in features, but with a kindly, pleasant eye, and dressed in slight mourning. The other was a young girl, of perhaps twelve years old, tall and slim for her age, with a sweet, earnest face, and whose abundant gold-brown hair had been braided with exquisite care. Indeed her whole dress and manner were very lady-like; and no one could look at her without being struck with her sweet and thoughtful innocence. The little woman called her Lisbeth; and she the little woman "mamma;" and this, unlike as they were, was their relationship—that of mother and child. They said in a soft voice to Mrs. Roden, that they hoped "after church she would come home with them, according to their message of the day before, for Aunt Lisbeth expected her." To this the old lady replied, "that perhaps having

the stranger child with her, she should intrude ; indeed perhaps after so solemn a thing as a funeral, it would be more proper to go home, and keep still for the rest of the day." But both the little mamma and young Lisbeth replied, "No ; from what they had heard and saw, they thought the little child would behave properly—and if not, they would teach her ; and as for the rest, the old gentlewoman would be as quiet with them as at home, for there would be no one but themselves." Then Mrs. Roden, with many grateful thanks, said softly she would "go," for it was a great privilege and treat to her at all times to be invited.

The rest of the congregation then came in—and it was rather a large one that afternoon ; for many were there to witness the stranger's funeral—and soon the clergyman followed. He read the beautiful prayers, and preached a short and appropriate sermon, which brought tears into many eyes, and touched some hard and unrepentant hearts. During all this time little Jane behaved very tolerably ; Mrs. Roden's warning finger being sufficient to stay her restlessness or questioning tongue. After the service, the coffin, which had been just nailed down in the

vestry, was brought into the church ; prayers were read, and then it was carried forth to that part of the churchyard appropriated to strangers. Little Jane and Mrs. Roden followed it ; and here, when it was hidden out of sight in the deep grave, and the earth rattled on the coffin-lid, the child felt very sorry, and wept some tears ; for though her old Granny had always been so cruel to her, yet it was sad for her body to lie down in so deep a place, a prey to darkness and worms. And the little child thought she would never again think bitterly of her old Granny ; but as she once did, when she made her a new frock out of some pretty gowns she kept in a mysterious box, in a dismal old room above the kitchen.

The burial over, Mrs. Roden and little Jane retraced their steps, for "little mamma" and "young Lisbeth" had gone on before. By the churchyard-gate Mrs. Roden stopped to speak to another of her kindly neighbours ; for it was the master of the adjacent farm, into whose barn the panniers and crocks had been carried.

" Well, missis," he said, " the dog's took to his food at last. He's yet shut up in the stable ; for you see, when he was let out, he did nothing

but howl by the dead-house door. It's a faithful cre'tur, so you see I'm right glad he's took to his food once more. He'll soon leave off pining now, 'specially if he sees the little one a bit."

"Yes, neighbour; from what the little one tells me of Pincher, he'll be worth having, if only to guard the house; and I dare say we shall be able to find a bone and a dish of milk for him. So, if you'll bring him to my door to-morrow morning, it 'll add another to the many kindnesses thee and thine be ever doing for me."

"Nay, nay! a neighbour's a neighbour, that's all, mistress. Good day." Then, laying his hand on little Jane's head, the farmer added, "Say thy prayers, little one, and be good to the old missis; and if so be thou art, thou shan't want a shilling t'ort a new frock at Midsummer and the new year." Thus saying, the kind farmer went homeward to tea.

Mrs. Roden and little Jane had not far to go. At a little distance down the village street, they began to hear the murmur of a mountain brook; and they soon came in sight of the old stone bridge which crossed it. On this side of it was a low wall; and within a paved fore-court was

an ancient cottage, of tolerable size, whilst a large and beautiful garden ran sideways, and far along the rippling brook. The blinds of the windows on either side the porch were down; but the gable of the cottage next the brook and garden had a most pleasant parlour; for the lattices were open, and the snowy muslin curtains waved lightly in the wind. Opening the porch-door, and going in, Mrs. Roden, at the other end of a small hall, which ran through the house and led to the garden beyond, turned into the pleasant parlour, where the "little mamma" had just set forth tea most daintily, and was now bringing in nice fruits and cakes, and bread and butter from the kitchen. Bidding the old lady take off her shawl and bonnet, she added, when this was done, that she might, if she pleased, tell Aunt Lisbeth that tea was ready. So going forth into the garden, Mrs. Roden went up the wide terrace-path which ran beside the brook, and there, on a low garden seat, sat an elderly lady and the young girl who had been at church. Though their ages were so different, and the one was fair, and the other had been dark when in her prime, the likeness between them—in voice, in manner, and in features—was very great. You

saw how they loved one another, for they sat hand in hand: the young girl's head rested on her aunt's shoulder, and a book lying on her lap, the aunt was reading in a low voice to her dear one—

“Whether men reap or sow the fields,
Her admonitions Nature yields;
That not alone by bread we live,
Or what a hand of flesh can give;
That every day should leave some part
Free for a sabbath of the heart:
So shall the seventh be truly blest
From morn till eve with hallowed rest.”

Mrs. Roden waited till the lady had done reading, then she made her “manners,” a thing she could not help, as she often told Mr. Helsby the clergyman, where Miss Downton was concerned, “for that lady was so unlike most of the folks around her;” and then taking young Lisbeth's seat, she sat down. Miss Downton was very deaf, but she had a trumpet with which she could hear very well; so when this was adjusted they chatted together very pleasantly, and Mrs. Roden spoke of her hopes, and joys, and fears, with the simplicity of a child. Presently she dived her hand into her deep pocket, and bringing out a snowy pocket-handkerchief, unfolded it,

and showed therein a somewhat rudely-painted little miniature of a young man.

"This is the likeness of my poor boy," she said. "It was painted about a year before Cassy quarrelled with us, and he left home. I've brought it, ma'am, for you to judge if there is any likeness between it and the little child, or whether my fond heart hopes falsely in the matter."

The deaf lady laid her hand kindly on that of Mrs. Roden. "Be prepared for the worst," she said, "and then you will not be disappointed. There may be a likeness, but it may be an incidental one; for though the rumour reached you that your son married before he went to America, it is not probable that if he had a child born he should leave it behind him; but rather take the poor child, as Abraham the strangers, to his tent. If no one claims her—if the curate's inquiries prove useless, or even those of Mr. Helsby when he returns—accept little Jane for her own sake. Teach her to be useful to you—to light the fire, to boil the kettle, to clean the house—and, beginning thus early, she will learn in time that work is a blessing to us all."

"Oh, yes, ma'am, she'll sure to do that. She's

already a handy little thing, though brought up in a rough and dirty way ; for, young as she is, she had to drudge about the wretched hovel where the old woman we've buried to-day lived. For two mornings I showed her my ways, and this morning she rose of herself, and lighted the fire, and boiled the kettle, and set the breakfast-things quite tidily before I was astir. But I think, ma'am, Mrs. Downton will be waiting tea. I was to say it was ready."

So Aunt Lisbeth rose and went with her niece and Mrs. Roden towards the cottage. As she thus went feebly onwards, it was plain to see that the deaf gentlewoman had been born and reared a lady. The exquisite neatness and simplicity of her dress, her thoughtful, intellectual, even handsome face, her gentle voice and tender manner, all bespoke a generous rearing and a generous heart. The deepest trials of this human life had baptized her with their holiest tears, and softened a nature that otherwise, in its extreme interpretation of right and duty, might have been too hard and stern. Born the daughter of a physician, she had through a long life supported herself in honourable independence by the labours of her pen ; and, when too old to work,

she had come thus to this mountain village to share her little savings with a favourite brother's widow and orphan child. In order to eke out their narrow means, as well as save something towards finishing young Lisbeth's education, the widow kept a little shop for the sale of tea, coffee, linendrapery, and stationery. Through the weekdays the widow tended this as well as performed the duties of her house, whilst Aunt Lisbeth, quiet in her parlour and garden, nursed her infirmities and taught her beloved child and namesake. It was a pleasant household; strife or bitterness had no dwelling there. The two younger looked up to the elder with love and veneration; and she, in her turn, knew not what self was in what related to their joy or woe.

When Aunt Lisbeth and Mrs. Roden reached the parlour, "little mamma" was pouring out the tea, and little Jane was already busy with her bread and butter at a side table, for the motherly little woman thought the child might be nervous, untaught as she was, if seated at the table with themselves. So Aunt Lisbeth, ere she sat down, spoke to little Jane, patted her head, and looked keenly at her, and then said to **Mrs. Roden**, in a whisper, as she took her seat,

“The likeness is really striking, and, what is more, the child has a well-formed head; still I would not build up false hopes. Be rather, as I have already said, like Abraham, who, taking in men, entertained angels unaware.”

This was all that was said, and the Sabbath meal proceeded pleasantly in kindly chat about neighbours and friends, the garden, the flowers, the bees; the brook meanwhile rippling on and on in pretty monotony. But whether they chatted, or sipped their tea, or glanced away through the pleasant casements, they all observed how little Jane's attention was arrested by an elongated piece of exquisitely-painted porcelain, a rich group of flowers on a dark ground, which, set in a little gilt frame, hung on the nicely-papered wall close to where she sat. Once or twice they questioned her as to what struck her in the little picture, but she hung her head abashed and made no answer.

After tea, young Lisbeth played some sacred music very nicely, for her aunt had taught her, and latterly Mrs. Helsby, the clergyman's wife, had given her lessons. When this was over, Mrs. Roden prepared to go.

“I forgot to tell you,” said Aunt Lisbeth, as

the old lady pinned on her shawl, "that poor Oliver Shelve was here late last night, and in great trouble. Hardthorn, who was very bitter because he had not got the donkey for his own use, had been to the farm, and told Oliver and his mother that the Misses Butler were about to call in the mortgage, and of course if the money could not be paid, the ladies' lawyers would seize the land. Poor Mrs. Shelve cried bitterly, for she said they had all struggled so hard to pay the interest, and if time were given to them they might pay the principal ; but they couldn't if all they had was seized ; and she said how she had been left a needy widow with twelve children, and how nobly her eldest son Oliver had behaved, in working, as it were, night and day, in order to support them and to carry on the farm. Poor things ! I fear if Miss Cassy and the steward have talked the old ladies over to do this cruel thing, there is little doubt but what it will be done."

"Yes, indeed ! Cassy will never move her ladies' hearts to charity, believe me ; but I will go and speak to Susan Shelve in the morning, on my way to take little Jane to school, for I want to tell them that the donkey need be no longer a trouble to them, that he can graze on the grass-

plot beneath the trees, and that old William has cleared out the tool-house as a stable for him."

"Well," said Miss Downton, "I will try and get so far as yours some evening to see both him and Pincher, for the village children, I am told, talk of nothing else." Thus saying, aunt Lisbeth bid her kindly friend good night; and parting with the little mamma and young Lisbeth at the gate, Mrs. Roden and little Jane went their homeward way.

Here, when the old lady had read prayers and a chapter in her Bible, she made little Jane go up to bed. Some hour afterwards, when she went upstairs, the child still lay awake upon her pillow.

"Can't you sleep, my dear?" she asked, fearing the child was ill.

"No! I was thinking of something."

"What?" And the old gentlewoman sat down on a chair beside the bed.

"I was thinking of that little picture I saw this afternoon."

"Dear Lord! give me strength! Why my boy painted it—my poor Will! I have another in my drawer; wait a minute—wait a minute. Dear Lord, be merciful to thy long-hoping servant!"

As she said this, Mrs. Roden tottered rather

than walked to an old-fashioned bureau, and, opening it, took thence something wrapped in cotton wool. When carefully undone, there was seen an oblong slab of porcelain, like that at Miss Downton's, though the flowers, so exquisitely painted, were different in kind.

"I gave Miss Downton that little picture," she said, nervously, as she sat down again, "because she likes such things, and has been very good to me. The other I keep wrapped up here, for fear of Cassy: she never knew my poor boy sent them! Now tell me"—and the old lady spoke with a faltering tongue—"why, my little one, thy eye noticed it?"

"Why," replied the child in a whisper, as though she feared some listening ear, "once when Granny left the key in the box she was so partik'lar about, Ben peeped into it, and showed me not only a lot o' pretty gowns, but a piece o' chany, painted just like this, only that the flowers was a bit different. The woman that was my mother had died at the house, soon after he came to be old dad's apprentice, and so he supposed the box had been hers."

The old lady placed her hands together, palm to palm. "And who was Ben?" she asked.

“I never knowed. He was not one on ‘em. He was only a poor lad, as had no father nor mother, and had been brought there to work. They beat him a deal, and clemmed him more than me.”

This was all little Jane would tell the motherly creature. But presently, when her head rested on the pillow, and her eyes were closed in sleep, warmer kisses fell upon her face than, as yet in this life, she had ever known.

CHAPTER IV.

A DISCOVERY AT SCHOOL.

ON the morrow morning, quite early, something touched Mrs. Roden’s sleeping face, and when she awoke she found little Jane standing beside her.

“If you please, grandma,” for so Mrs. Roden had said the day before she might call her, “the kettle boils, and breakfast’s set.”

“It is very soon, child, isn’t it?” Mrs. Roden looked at the old-fashioned watch hanging in the case above her head, and found it only six o’clock.

"But please I'm going to school, and Pincher's coming."

"Both wonderful events, child, certainly," smiled the good old lady. "Well, I was one day young myself; so run down stairs, and put three spoonfuls of tea carefully in the teapot, and I'll soon be with you."

Mrs. Roden kept her word; and soon she and little Jane were seated at the pleasant breakfast-table, the open door letting in the early sun, and the dewy perfume of the flowers. When this was over, and she had read her customary chapter in the Bible—for the good old lady never forgot her daily worship of Him who gives us all things—she taught the little maid to wash the breakfast-things nicely and in an orderly manner; and then dressing her in the bonnet and black frock she had worn the day before, she told her she might go and wait by the garden-wicket, and watch for Pincher's coming. This was a delight indeed; and soon the farmer was seen coming from his yard, leading the dog by a string. The moment he caught sight of little Jane the old fellow was wild with joy; he barked and frisked and tugged at the string, and when liberty was given to him, he leapt at a bound across Mrs.

Roden's wicket, and knocking little Jane nearly over, half smothered her with his caresses. Not content with this, he bolted up and down the grass-plot like one wild ; and presently trespassing upon the borders, began to make sad havoc amidst the flowers.

“ Dear me, dear me ! ” called the old lady from her upstairs casement, “ that dog will never suit me if he does so. He’s trampling down all my best picotees and balsams. Pray put the string again round his neck, neighbour : the little child suits me, but that dog’s a dreadful fellow ! ”

Pincher was not, however, so bad as he seemed. A few words from a voice he loved and was accustomed to, sobered him at once ; and by the time the old lady had put on her shawl and bonnet, and come down stairs, Pincher was as good as could be, and sat on the step beside the child as gravely as a judge.

“ Please, grandma,” said little Jane, “ Pincher only did so because he was very glad, and he won’t any more.”

Pincher himself signed and sealed this promise by caressing the old lady’s hand, whereat the old lady being mollified, went forthwith to her pantry, and gave him some milk and a bone.

Peace thus restored, and her chat with her neighbour concluded, Mrs. Roden locked up the house, and went on her way hand in hand with little Jane.

Just where the village street widened, and where a fine spring poured its clear waters into a deep old trough of lichen-covered stone, they met little Angelina, her school-bag plumped out with apples, as it was plain to see. In a moment she had little Jane's hand in hers, and her sweet face was raised towards Mrs. Roden.

The good old lady kissed it tenderly. "You see," she said, "as you brought me little Jane, I've kept her. She's on her way to school, for I mean she should learn to read and sew. But we must turn aside a bit, as I need to speak to Susan Shelve." So saying, the old lady went onward, leaving the children to follow slowly, for they had much to whisper of, and the contents of the satchel to look at as well as taste.

A lane shadowed by the neighbouring hills soon brought her to a poor-looking dilapidated farmhouse, the kitchen of which was cheerless and empty when she entered it. But a knock or two soon summoned a woman from an adjacent dairy or back kitchen, where, with her sleeves turned

up, she was making cheese. She had once been comely, but time and sorrow had dimmed her beauty, and some of the latter seemed freshly born, for her eyes were red from recent weeping.

"I'm sorry to see thee in trouble again, Susan," said Mrs. Roden; "partik'lar as thee hast seen so much of it. And I'm sorry likewise to see thee drudging alone without thy daughter."

"Ay! the work was hard enough for two, it'll be harder for one. But Kitty's gone this very morning after a place; for you see, with trouble coming thus upon us, there'll be no home for any one. Thus the last of my six girls will have left us!"

"Poor things! I wish it was in my power to help them, even for thy Oliver's sake, who is a son such as few women can own."

"Help, Mrs. Roden! thou hast enough to do with thy own sore cares. The root of thy trouble is the root of ours, believe me."

"Perhaps so," replied Mrs. Roden, thoughtfully.

"I'm sure of it, ma'am. Thy Cassy's helping the steward's cruel work. For she alone has her ladies' ear now they are so infirm. Indeed, scarce another person sees them except it's Hardthorn."

“And what can he want the land for, Susan ? It must be for some purpose of his own, for it can be of no use to his mistresses. Is it coal he wants to seek, or what is it ?”

“I can’t guess ; only I think my Oliver says there’s good clay on a part of it ; and my poor master, many a year ago, overheard some gentlemen say, who were staying at the hall, that there was a fortune for the getting on the land behind the school. But I know no more, though it’s now just two years since the steward took to hankering after it, for the great colliery across the hills was then begun, and he and others commenced building a lot of houses for working-folks. It was said bricks were scarce, and many a thing which was brought across the dreary hills out of Staffordshire might be made nearer home. But how true it is I cannot say.”

“Ay, ay,” replied Mrs. Roden, with a sigh ; “as I say in most things, if my dear lad were nigh, I might learn. But, come, I must not be selfish with my own sorrows when thine are of to-day.”

So saying, she strove for cheerfulness, and, gaining it, was speaking hopefully to Susan, when Oliver came in from his work in the barn

hard by. The expression on his face was more sorrowful than usual, and his manner sterner and more resolved. Both his mother and his good neighbour strove to comfort him; and as to the former, it was wonderful how well and suddenly she could hide her own agony of spirit when her son was by.

“Nay, nay,” he bravely said, “if the worst come to the worst, and they take all we have, they cannot rob us of our good name. We must come and be thy neighbours, Mrs. Roden; and instead of being my own master, find one who will pay me weekly wages—whilst those who think to grow rich on an injustice of the kind may fail to do so, and those who trust too much and expect too much may be disappointed.”

This was all he said; for when he had done speaking, he took little Jane’s hand, and, bidding Mrs. Roden follow, he led the way from the farm kitchen to an adjacent orchard, where the sun, stealing in through the open spaces between the trees, cast its pleasant light upon the soft, smooth turf. Oliver leant upon the gate, and little Jane peeped between the rails, and thus they saw poor Smoke quietly grazing in the cool shadows beneath the trees.

“Call him,” said Oliver.

Little Jane obeyed. As soon as he heard her voice, the poor beast pricked its ears, left off grazing, turned round, and when he saw the child, he came trotting to the gate with great signs of joy. Unlike that of Pincher’s, it was quiet and but little demonstrative, and consisted in rubbing his nose up and down the gate and in curling his lips about her little hand. Then, as she caressed his neck and ears, she felt that his coat was already softer, and she said so. But Oliver only smiled; he did not say how kind he had been to the poor beast during the few days it had been under his care, but only, opening the gate, led out the donkey, and retraced his steps to the house-door, where Pincher hailed his old friend by sundry jumps, and barks, and runnings round and round. Then Oliver, putting a halter about Smoke’s neck, placed the little girls upon his back, and Mrs. Roden saying her kindly “good morning!” the small company went onward to the school-house, the children feeding the ass with apples by the way, whilst the good old lady slowly following, meditated gravely on divers things which floated through her mind.

It was yet so early, that as they wound their

way down the grassy bank to the ford of the brook, the country children were then only on their way to school ; most of them carrying their satchels and slates, some of them their homely dinners in handkerchief or basket, whilst all of them bore on their faces the bloom of the rose and the freshness of the summer's morning.

As the death of the old crockery woman on the hills, the kindly shelter of little Jane by Mrs. Roden, and the impounding of the donkey had been talked about in all the cottages and homesteads of the district, the children at once recognized old Smoke and the little girl, and, crowding about the former like a cluster of busy bees, led him in triumph across the brook. Here others, attracted by the noise, joined them from the school-room, and soon the whole school were assembled, wondering, listening, and interested. Some searched their pockets for an apple, others ran back to the school-room to look in their dinner-baskets for bread or cake, whilst others, seeing that little Jane and Angelina had ridden him to school, wanted to mount and ride too. But Mrs. Roden shook her head, and bid them go in.

Just as she was doing this, the old school-master appeared at the school-house door. He

was a tall lean old man, with a sleepy-looking face and a red nightcap on his head, whilst, as he was lame, he leant heavily on a stick.

“What’s all this?” he bawled, in a loud and angry voice; “don’t you know school’s begun, and yet you dare be a running out, some of you? Come in, or I’ll set you all a swingeing task.” But as the truant children, or indeed those just arrived, paid no heed to his summons, he came a few steps forward and saw the ass.

“What, that ass again!” he said. “I’ll pound him, and Hardthorn shall have him this time.”

“Don’t be angry, Mr. Slow,” spoke Mrs. Roden, “the poor beast is only here for a moment, whilst I bring this little girl to school. I spoke of her coming the other day, Mr. Slow, not as a free scholar, but to be weekly paid for.”

The old schoolmaster saw his error in a moment. “Beg pardon, ma’am, beg pardon, ma’am, pray walk in. The donkey’s quite welcome to graze a bit, but children will be children.”

“I know it, Mr. Slow, and the donkey is only here because he’s on his way to mine, from Oliver Shelve’s. Here’s the little girl, and as she easily learns, I hope you will teach her to read nicely, and Mrs. Slow teach her to sew.”

“ Of course, ma’am. Every boy and girl learns here,” whereupon Mr. Slow, in order to show himself the most diligent of schoolmasters instead of being, as common report said, the most idle and negligent, hastened into his school-room, formed his classes, mounted his desk, and then and there made his eldest scholars begin a spelling lesson. Very badly and negligently they spelt, yet, Mrs. Roden present, he declared it perfect. A lad named John Thomas spelt apart-
ment with two pp’s, whereat the master, too lazy to consult the book before him, was rejoiced.

“ Very good, John, I see you’ll be an honour to father and mother some day ! Now you, Bob Smith, spell apple pudding. Be careful, for profit cometh out of learning.”

“ A—ple—Apple.”

“ Very good, Bob.”

“ Pu—den—puden—apple pudding.”

“ Nicely, boy, nicely ! As reward cometh from well doing, let us hope you may have many apple puddings. Now, Mrs. Roden, this is the way we go on.”

The good gentlewoman thought the “ way ” a very bad one, but as she could not without great offence tell Mr. Slow that he was a dunce, more

especially as, being an old servant of the Misses Butler, he had been nominated by them, and as little Jane could take no great harm, in this early stage of learning, she said nothing. Mrs. Slow, a sleepy fat old woman, whose brain seemed wandering back to her saucepans and her kitchen, now came in ; and when the old lady had talked with her a while, as to hemming and knitting, she withdrew, but not before she had whispered to little Jane to be a good and diligent child, and should the others play truant during the morning, she must keep at her tasks, for only through such diligence would she learn to read and sew.

As village gossip truly said, old Tim was only painstaking whilst others were by. For no sooner had Mrs. Roden crossed the brook than he let the boys drawl at their lessons ; whilst those who went to do their writing, blotted and scrawled their copies as they pleased. By and by he nodded his head and went off into a doze, from which he was only awakened by the appearance of Mrs. Slow, who, absent for a while in the kitchen, now returned with a cool gooseberry puff and a mug of beer ; and when these had been despatched, he did not hesitate to

take half an hour's sound sleep. Awakening suddenly from this, and finding all the boys and half the girls absent, he called them in, and caning a few soundly, he urged his wife to her duty, and together they hurried over the few ill-said lessons, grumbled greatly, and at a quarter before twelve gave the signal for leaving off. The youngest children being taught by monitors, had been kept more diligently at their tasks, so that as she ran out of school and crossed the brook, hand in hand with Angelina—for Mrs. Roden had invited the pretty child to dinner—little Jane had the pleasure of thinking that she had said her letters over several times, knew some of them already, and had done her first piece of hemming.

The good old lady had provided a nice dinner for the children, and whilst eating it, little Jane gave her a full account of her morning's tasks.

“Well, my dear, well,” replied the old lady, “if you don't learn much, you will at least a little. I, perhaps, can teach you something, and this very morning I have had a visit from Miss Downton, who says, that when the winter evenings come, you shall go to the cottage, and Lisbeth shall improve your reading and teach

you writing. So you see, my dear, if you are only good and dutiful to me, what advantages will be yours."

The little child had an affectionate heart, untaught and rough mannered as she yet was ; so acting on its warmest impulse, she crept to her good friend's side, and laid her face tenderly on her shoulder. The tenderness was well accepted, for the good old lady said softly to herself, "I have few earthly treasures, but little Jane will be one, if she is loving to me."

After playing about the lawn till just two o'clock, the little girls had their hair brushed and their faces and hands washed ; for the old lady knew full well the worth of teaching children what neatness and personal cleanliness are. Thus as they stood on the step with shining faces, little Jane asked if she might play that afternoon, as the other children, on the school-green.

"To be sure, Jane, only do not spoil your clothes, and be home by half-past four, for that is the hour I take tea."

The children ran off, and soon reached school ; and when their tasks were done, Mrs. Slow being more diligent than during the morning, they were suffered to go forth, with other little com-

panions, who like themselves sat on the lower forms. Yet Jane and Angelina kept together, and running about in the golden sunshine, or else in the shadows of some sweeping elms, skipped across the stepping-stones, or watched the minnows as they glided by. Then they ran away across the heathy tract behind the school-house, till they reached the hill foot, where a spring trickled down. It was a boggy sort of place, and rushes hid much of it from the eye. But little Jane had been well accustomed to moorland tracts, so pushing aside the rushes with venturesome hand, she passed on. All at once she stopped, and called out to Angelina—

“ Oh ! here’s clay, such as old dad made the pots with, that Granny used to sell ! Come, here’s a stone to stand on, and I’ll show you how.”

Angelina followed her friend, and soon they stood together on a broad flatstone, where Jane, kneeling down, puddled the clay with her hand in the running water, and patting it, and kneading it, formed with great dexterity a little dish, much to Angelina’s delight and wonder.

“ Dad had a sun-pan,” she said, “ where he ‘blunged’ the clay, and then it rested till the water dried off. Then he throwed it on the wheel, or

formed it in moulds, and then Ben and I carried the things to dry, and next to the oven."

Another dish made, the child took some clay, and putting a stick through it, whirled it round and round till it formed a rude sort of cup. This is the way savages who know nothing of the potter's wheel, form all round vessels of moderate size, and, at making small cups in this way, little Jane had seen the moorland children play. Angelina's cries of delight brought other children, and soon the whole school were paddling in and out the clay—to the detriment of shoes and clothes. But try as they would, none could make rude pots like little Jane, and this only because ever since she was five years old she had been made to work, and had seen others work about "a potter's bank."

At last it was time to go, and when the children had washed their dirty hands and shoes in the brook, they departed to their several homes, leaving their old master and mistress to wonder at the unusual silence of the past hour. From that day forward little Jane became a great favourite with the whole school, because she could make them plates and dishes ; and very soon paddling in the great clay bed had supplanted the

delights of minnow-catching, leap-frog, and other games.

At last one evening little Jane went home with her shoes and pinafore more than usually dirty: Mrs. Roden saw this, and questioning her rather sternly, Jane hung down her head.

“Now, Jane, tell me the truth. I have noticed this before, and now I must know the cause.”

“Please, ma’am, we’ve been making little pots and pans.”

“Where?”

“Behind the school. You can see pieces of coal at the foot of the hill, and there is a great clay-bed just by. It is clay just such as old dad and Ben made the pots with that Granny used to sell.”

Mrs. Roden forgot both pinafore and soiled shoes in her surprise.

“This then is the reason,” she said, as though to herself, “that that bad man, Hardthorn, wants to get the land. Poor Oliver, I wish I had a bit more money for thy sake, and I wish my own poor lad were by.”

This last was Mrs. Roden’s constant prayer. But he was away in America, people said; and

the weary days and months went by, and he never came, or even wrote. Thus was she desolate and alone.

CHAPTER V.

A GRIM VISITOR.

The summer had gone, the autumn with its russet leaves and luscious fruit had waxed into winter; and early winter, with its bitter winds and imprisoning frosts, was come. Yet through all these weeks Miss Cassy had never once been near her mother-in-law's quiet home; and as to the little pinched doles of butter, bacon, cheese, or fruit, or occasionally a tiny fowl, they had ceased altogether—much to Mrs. Roden's satisfaction, for as Miss Cassy always took care to twit her afterwards, their acceptance had been a bitter thing; and indeed the honestly proud old woman disliked alms in any shape. She had enough for humble independence, and she wanted not the superfluity of the rich. To her kindly messages Miss Cassy sent no answer; and she received a fleecy shawl and two nice pairs of mitts, which the good old woman had knitted for her, with the same stony indifference. These

were all signs of war in Miss Cassy's breast, and a battle was as sure to be the issue as thunder follows dark and lowering clouds.

Yet Mrs. Roden—as the good and innocent always have—had her great peace; a peace which the selfish and bad-hearted never know. For as little Jane improved beneath the influence of kindly nurture, more and more did the child grow like her absent son; and when bright eyes so wonderfully like his looked at her joyously and kindly, when his very voice spoke, when his very hands seemed to touch her—when instinctive nature thus told her so truly of much which rumour had whispered, but which she had never really known, she blessed God she had followed the dictates of her heart, and sheltered the forlorn child. Hitherto her winter evenings had been long and desolate, now they were as happy as summer days.

Yet little Jane had many faults, as all badly-trained children have. But she had naturally a sweet temper and a kind heart, and a love of order and truthfulness. So obstinacy and sullenness grew less and less, and the fond old lady reproved not in vain. Moreover, she was handy and dutiful. She fetched water from the brook—

she went errands—she lighted the morning's fire—and on Saturdays, when they had a whole day's holiday at school, she was the busiest of little handmaids. She washed the floor, and cleaned the knives, and rubbed the windows, and watched Mrs. Roden whilst she made nice pastry and delicate cakes. Even in spite of the flagrant idleness of the master and mistress, she made some little progress at school; and now that the winter evenings were come, and she was permitted to go three times weekly to the cottage by the bridge, where Miss Downton set her sums, young Lisbeth lessons, and the little mamma showed her pretty things in needlework, the little girl was likely to improve rapidly.

It was within ten days of Christmas, and being after tea, Mrs. Roden's kitchen looked quaint and cheerful. There was a large bright fire, such as we always see in our north-western counties, and its glow was reflected in the ancient, highly-polished furniture. The hearth was warmly carpeted, and Pincher lay snug in the chimney corner, on a cushion Mrs. Roden had made him out of an old shawl—so great a favourite had the old fellow become—whilst the old lady herself, seated in her high-backed chair, taught

little Jane the art of marking divers nice pairs of warm stockings she had been knitting for the good vicar, Mr. Helsby. Forgetting some stitch, she presently took the candle, and went up stairs for ~~an~~ ancient sampler, leaving little Jane on her stool by the fire. A moment after this the front door opened, and a woman, coming in, took a large basket off a boy who had accompanied her, closed the door softly, and was close to the fire-place almost before little Jane saw her. But the instant she did she instinctively guessed it was Miss Cassandra, so rising, she dropped a humble curtsey.

“Who are you?” asked the woman hoarsely, as she rudely lifted up the child’s chin, so as to get a clearer view of her face.

“If you please, ma’am, Jane—”

“What else?”

“I don’t know, ma’am. Granny never said I had another.”

Looking still more grimly, Cassy drew the child roughly towards her, stared rudely in her face, gave her a slap, and then pushing her back towards her seat, bid her behave herself; an unnecessary injunction, as the poor child had not misbehaved herself in any way. Cassy then re-

paired to the dresser, took down sundry dishes, and bringing them to the table, began unpacking her basket by the light of the fire. On one dish she laid a pair of fowls of extraordinary size ; on another a bunch of choice grapes ; on a third some tartlets, and so on. This done, she drew a chair, sat down, and looked again fiercely at the child. But her cruel gaze was of not long continuance, for Mrs. Roden, hearing strange footsteps, hastened down stairs.

“ Well Cassy, my dear,” she said, in her kind way, “ I am glad to see thee at last. Better late than never.”

“ Perhaps so. But I heard, what I also see, that you have a visitor. A daughter-in-law in this case might be troublesome.”

“ Cassy,” replied the old lady, “ do not be bitter. Look at the child, and see if she be not like our poor Will. With this likeness to him, do you think I could have driven the forlorn creature from my door ? ”

“ That is a matter of opinion. To a child bred a tramp, tramping is an easy thing. But she must go soon : all your well-wishers, mother, say so. For charity is one thing—prudence is another.”

The good old woman made no answer; but wiping away a struggling tear, took up a stocking and began to mark it.

“As this is a case of necessity, and I have not interfered hitherto, she must go at once. On this condition I have brought you a pair of fowls, and a few other things, which I hope you will enjoy.”

Mrs. Roden did not seem to hear these latter words; her heart was set on graver things. She laid down her work, and putting her hands together, said, with a firmness Miss Cassandra had never known before, “No, Cassy, the child shall not go: since the summer she has shared with me my plate and cup, and shall do so still: you have no right to interfere.”

“I have, whilst you live on the interest of my father’s money. Supposing, now, the child’s friends come and claim her?”

“She has none I shall give her up to, unless they prove it. The old woman with whom she came across the hills was no relative to her, she says; and her mother died in the desolate mountain pottery where she was born and reared. Cassandra, let pity touch your heart! riches are hardening it more and more. You know

not what chastisement of sorrow may yet be yours."

"That is my business. What I want to learn—do you intend to keep this child?"

"I do, indeed, till Providence raises her up a better friend. The little child is very good and teachable, and I will not turn her from my doors. Whether my imagination is at fault or not, my heart beats warmly towards her, so we will bide together." And as she spoke, Mrs. Roden imprisoned little Jane's hand warmly in her own; and the child, stealing up beside her, cleaved to her as the tendril to a tree.

Even whilst this was being said and done, Miss Cassy had begun to repack her basket with her treasures of fowl and tart; and when this feat was accomplished, she drew herself up to her full height, and settled her old poke bonnet.

"I shall want my money!"

"The thousand pounds your father left you? Of course, as I've always said, you can have it; though it was a wish expressed in his will, that I should keep it, and receive the interest till I died. But you can have it, Cassy; poverty is not the saddest ill which can befall us."

"I want my money; and my ladies' lawyer

has already had instructions about it. As you study no interest of mine, I shall not yours."

"Cassy, does all this bitterness come because of a few weeks' shelter to a desolate child? If so, God help you—both as to judgment and to tenderness. Take care; those you trust may not be so trustworthy as you believe."

"What do you mean?"

"You know as well as I, Hardthorn is not a straightforward man; and he is borrowing money, I am told, in all directions. Take care of yours: you will not be the first woman he has deceived for the sake of gain."

"Perhaps not; but if I can make money of my money, instead of it lying idle, it is something to me. With this, and my lady's handsome legacy, I may be yet as well off as though my father had not taken a second wife, and left her what he had."

"Say no more, Cassy. If you had behaved better to my poor boy, the whole of it might have been yours by this time. But you made his home miserable. He left me—he did wildly; and now, God knows whether the earth bears, or the grave holds his body!" The poor old woman wept bitterly, hung down her head; and little

Jane, nestling to her, gathered these tears up unto herself.

Miss Casey made no reply, but taking up her heavy basket, made towards the door ; there she turned once more.

“ Recollect this ; that if you'll get rid of that brat, I'll be friends with you again, but not till then. As to my money, I shall take it into my hands, whether or no, and not a day too soon. When old people get simple, wiser people must act for them.”

“ As to the child, Caasy, I have made my election : as to the money—time may prove who is the simpler. As to poor Oliver Shelve's land, if the steward thinks to grow rich by working it for a pottery, he is likely to be mistaken. Deputies have not always their master's interest at heart ; and no work requires longer experience of head and hand than that of a potter's bank.”*

This allusion seemed to bring to Miss Cassy's mind some fresh source of bitterness. Coming back a step or two, she pointed to little Jane.

“ If it hadn't been for your harbouring that tramp's child, it wouldn't have been known far and wide that the land was good for clay. She

* All pottery-works are locally called “ banks.”

blabbed it out to the children at the school. Now it's on everybody's tongue; and more than one would give Oliver his price for the land; but my ladies' lawyer has his hand too firmly upon it for that."

"He may—and you and your friends may strive to make profit out of others' misery; but I don't think you will succeed. Good night, Cassy; the little child stays with me. She has eaten of my bread—she has drunk of my cup; and in return she is very obedient and tender. I have made my choice."

Miss Cassy gave no reply to this; but ascending the steps, banged to the door. But once more she opened it, and bawled out in her loudest voice, "I know who has done all this—for though deaf, she has got a tongue."

"Cassy! Miss Downton is a lady, worthier far than you or I. As to her deafness, you should pity, not rail; for you know not what infirmity may yet be yours."

But the woman's heart was very hard. Her only answer was a witch-like laugh. This uttered, she closed the door.

As though she had expected to take back her fowls and other dainties, the boy had awaited

her return by the garden gate; so giving him the basket, she led the way to a little country inn, not far off, and here resuming her place in the gig which had brought her, the boy urged the horse into the dusky road that led to the ancient hall. But at no great distance from the village she stayed again, alighted, went some few paces down a diverging lane, and passing into a little wayside cottage, remained some time. Over the door was written "Post Office," for here lived the rural postman, John Smith by name, who, filling up his leisure time by shoe-making, announced the fact upon a board. He was an elderly, miserly man; and for the sake of saving, lived alone. He was not much liked the country round, though civil and punctual as to his duties; but if others lacked in hospitality towards him, at the hall he was always sure of a welcome and a mug of beer; and there were even occasions when he was admitted into the privacy of Miss Cassandra's parlour, and talked to her with closed doors.

When her business was at an end, Miss Cassy hastened on her way home.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ANCIENT LADIES.

WHEN Miss Cassy had warmed her hands by her parlour fire and divested herself of her queer-looking cloak and bonnet, for economy not fashion was always her consideration, she hastened to the back kitchen, and bid old Sue, who was cook and kitchenmaid combined, to put down immediately one of the plump fowls for supper. It was probable the steward would "look up" about that time, for as "mother-in-law had acted very vexatiously she had brought them back again." Then enjoining Betty, the aged housemaid, to lay the cloth neatly, she repaired up-stairs to her mistresses.

Since the cold weather had begun, the aged ladies had never left the rooms in which of late years they always passed the winter. These consisted of a parlour and large bedroom, opening from each other. In the one Miss Isabella lay a-bed, decrepit and indisposed; in the other, Miss Catherine sat drowsily by the fire. The little time since the summer had wrought a change even in the latter; her knitting and news-

paper lay unheeded ; and thus she sat, half sleeping, half awake, unless specially addressed, or when aroused by some sudden thrifful thought, which usually, as soon as expressed, flitted from her wandering brain. Now looking up, as Miss Cassy made her presence known, she uttered some querulous inquiry as to the hour, though her old tortoiseshell watch lay on the table.

Miss Cassy told her, and then entering upon divers thrifful topics, the business of which had in part been the cause of her visit to the village that afternoon, she talked to her mistress some time. Then artfully changing the subject, when she had given it as her opinion that the tea was very bad and the calico very dear at Mrs. Downton's shop, she spoke of her mother-in-law.

" Only think, my lady, that that tramp's child is still there ! "

Miss Catherine's memory treasured little but money subjects, so Cassy had again to recount the history of the old crockery woman dying on the hills. Her recollection thus refreshed, the old lady said, " Indeed ! "

" Yes, Miss Butler, it is enough to drive a careful woman like myself mad. There, for years I have been letting mother-in-law use my

money, and there she's wasting it as she does, by harbouring a trumper's child. But the urchin shall be got rid of, I'll take care; and that dog and ass, too, and this before another month is over. As to my thousand pounds, the lawyer has already orders to call it in."

"Yes, it's right to be careful, Cassy," was the laconic reply.

"It is, indeed, right to be careful, my lady, seeing what we can do with money now-a-days. What do you think? They've been finding potter's clay and coal on Oliver Shelve's land; and . . ."

"Hardthorn, I think, told me this when I last saw him, a month ago," interrupted the old lady, as her memory momentarily brightened up.

"He did; and since then Oliver Shelve has been trying to let the ground to the colliery proprietors over the hill. The risk is, that if they fail in making a profit from the land, the fellow will never pay up the interest."

"He has always done so very honestly, Cassy," said the old lady, a little tartly. "Miss Isabella and I have always found the Shelves most honest creatures."

Miss Cassy found that she had gone astray.

"Yes, my lady; but, as Hardthorn says, if you called in the loan, you could make twice as much interest of it elsewhere; or, what would be the same thing, if you'd take the land in hand, he could work it to a great profit, and thus spare Oliver and his mother much sorrow and suffering. Of course he does not mean by this all the young man's patrimony, he could have a field or two for a cow. Hardthorn refers to those acres at the rear of the school-house and about the hills beyond, which he could work to profit."

"Do you really think so, Cassy?"

"Yes, I do, my lady. It would be a very charitable deed. The quarter-day is very near, and Hardthorn could take the land at once, by saying you called in your loan."

"Well, Cassy, if it is a right thing, it shall be done. I will speak to Isabella when I go to bed, and to-morrow I will see if I am able to write to Mr. Field, the lawyer."

"There'll be no necessity for your troubling yourself so, my lady. Just give Hardthorn your written authority—that will be sufficient. If he acts at all, it must be at once, the quarter-day is so near."

"But I must have Isabella's consent."

"Yes, my lady ; but Miss Isabella has been very quiet all day—she scarcely notices a thing."

"Poor child ! she gets very infirm. I'll therefore think of this matter another time." And Miss Catherine seemed willing herself to lapse into sleep. But the wily waiting-woman, whose power, in fact, was immense, so plied her mistress with utterly false words, that, before another half-hour was over, the little paper which involved poor Oliver Shelve's utter ruin was written out and signed : all that remained to do was to obtain Miss Isabella's signature.

The few who habitually saw the aged sisters had noticed, particularly since her imbecility had grown, how much Miss Isabella shrunk from all intercourse with Cassy. She barely tolerated her officious ministrations—rarely answered her when she spoke—and never brightened up in her presence as she occasionally did in that of others. What was the source of this antipathy no one knew ; perhaps it was the result of a return to childishness ; but at least it was mutual, for Cassy avoided her younger mistress as much as her mistress avoided her. On this occasion she did not even condescend to make her purpose known, but going into the room with pen and ink in her

hand, she made the aged lady sign her cross, as Miss Isabella was accustomed to do when her signature was required to any ordinary document; and thus, without knowledge on the one hand or compunction on the other, the little patrimony of a good man was signed away.

Thus possessed of a document for which she had been striving for many days, she thought she had accomplished enough for one night at least; though the fact that her elder mistress had not yet made a will was a source of great perplexity to her. On this she depended for the grand legacy she always had in view, as well as for the possession of certain gowns, shawls, and furs, the number of which she knew as well as a good boy does his multiplication-table.

When the ladies had supped and Miss Catherine had been assisted to bed, Cassy went down to her parlour. Here she learnt that Mr. Hardthorn had enjoyed the fowl, though gallantly reserving the best portions for her. These being now brought in, she supped, and when all was cleared away, the steward sent in his compliments and a message, to say he would like to speak to her. This being permitted, he came, bringing with him his pipe and tobacco-box.

When they were quite alone, and Miss Cassy had assured herself that no listeners were by, she laid the document she had obtained on the table. Its inspection gave Mr. Hardthorn great pleasure; he said he should take possession on Christmas Day; and that as the mortgage was greatly more than the value of the land, he should seize household goods, cattle, farming-implements—in short, everything, for the Shelves had been his enemies, and should have no mercy at his hands.

“This done,” he continued, “I shall go into Staffordshire, and get those who will come, when the few necessary buildings are ready, and begin the pot-work at once. All that’s now wanting is ready money. I’ve a few thousands of my own. There is a little of my mistresses’ I can use, . . . and . . .”

“There’ll be my thousand pounds,” interrupted Miss Cassy, “if you will allow me ten per cent. interest.”

“Ten per cent., my dear Cassy; you shall have fifteen! to say nothing of a nice plain gold ring and a stone-fronted cottage in a flowery garden as soon as the old plagues of women are dead.”

This promise had been made so often that

Miss Cassy heard it without emotion or comment. But she said she must have the money well secured and the interest regularly paid.

"To be sure, my excellent friend ; fifteen per cent. paid as regularly as the church clock strikes, and the principal tied up as tight as a money-bag. But I suppose you had difficulty in getting the old woman to say you should have it ?"

"None at all. She seems to have prepared herself for the claim, but there is another difficulty," and Miss Cassy spoke in so changed a voice that the steward could but look at her.

"What ?"

"The thought I got into my head the other day is only too true. The child *is* William's child."

"Is it possible ?"

"There is not the least doubt of it. She is his very image, and fixed her eyes on me just as he used to do when I displeased him. Besides, from some inquiries I quietly made six years ago, I had reason to think that a child had been born and was alive."

"What can be done ?"

"Done ! Why, of course the child must be got away, and that pretty soon, too. You are going into the Potteries, and you can soon get

some one of the tramping class to fetch her. Ay! and that donkey, too, for the old woman is, I hear, buying hay for it at this dear season. She has a feeling the child is her son's, though she doesn't quite say so. But she shall be disappointed. I'll have neither him nor his here."

"You cannot help yourself, Cassy, if William Roden chooses to come from America, where, as you told me the other night, he is living in very prosperous circumstances—manager of a large potter's bank."

"He won't," she said, determinately, and blind in her obstinate self-conceit, "he won't. After the last letter which fell into my hands . . ."

"Put there, I suppose, by your friend the postman," interrupted the steward, a little maliciously, for her authoritative manner annoyed him.

"That as you please. When the letter came, I caused one to be written to say that his mother was dead, and her property fallen to me. Thinking thus, I am sure he will trouble me no more."

"I fear you may be mistaken, Miss Cassy."

"There, don't worry me with fears. All you have to do is to find out some needy fellow who

for a pound will come across the country and fetch the child."

"Shall I try and find out the old crockery woman's husband? He'd be glad to get back the donkey and the child too."

"No, let that source alone, if you please. If the old man once came on the track of mother-in-law he'd soon learn enough in the village (for I never knew folks so vicious against another as they are against me) to show him that it would be worth his while to tell all he knew! No! any rough fellow, glad of a pound and a donkey, will do. It'll be but to take the child to a pottery town, where it'll soon get work. To do this much will be easy enough."

The steward whistled softly—"Well, I'd take the ass, and make it useful. As to its owner, what was his name?"

"Let both alone."

This was said so tartly that Mr. Hardthorn thought he had better say no more, at least on this topic; so he reverted to that of the thousand pounds.

"You shall have it when you have signed a bond, securing to pay back the principal and interest at ten per cent. per annum."

“ Fifteen per cent., my dear ; say fifteen. Of course I will. But it’s getting late, I fear, so I’ll say good night !”

He shook Miss Cassy’s hand, and taking up his pipe and tobacco-box, left the room. He smiled as he did so. Perhaps he was thinking of “ the plain gold ring and the stone-fronted cottage in a flowery garden.” But he did not trust his thoughts to words.

CHAPTER VII.

TROUBLES FOR LITTLE JANE.

If our great English painter, Wilkie, had wanted a companion subject to his noble picture of the Rent Day, it might have been found on a bitterly cold January morning, in poor Oliver Shelve’s house. All his worldly goods were seized, and a few days afterwards sold—if selling it could be called, where kindly neighbours stepped in, and severally bought up a portion of the quaintly-shaped, old-fashioned furniture. Miss Downton bought a bed and clock ; Mr. Helsby, the settle and carved dresser ; Mrs. Roden, the great chest and the best chairs, which were none the worse

for having done service to several generations of honest men and women ; and other neighbours bought other things. So that the day after the sale, poor Oliver and his mother found the little cottage they had taken by the church as nicely plenished as though no trouble had been theirs. Not a neighbour would touch the farming stock ; only strangers bought it, who knew little of the injustice done. Nothing further than this could be effected. Mr. Holshy sought an interview with Miss Butler—but he was denied ; he wrote to Mr. Field, the solicitor—but that gentleman had no power of interfering ; and therefore the matter had to be left to God's good time. If by chance Miss Butler died without a will, the next heir was a distant relation of the name of Holte ; and he bore so excellent a reputation as a gentleman and a man of noble feeling, that all felt sure that many a bad deed would be reversed. But his succession to the property was a matter for hope rather than trust. He had been long employed in Canada as a judge ; and knew but little of the Misses Butler, nor they of him, for some old quarrel had long divided those of their respective names. If Miss Catherine's own inclinations bore fruit, he would never be her heir ;

but she had a morbid dread of making a will. To-morrow, and to-morrow, was alike her excuse and her resolve. She was of opinion that so long as she could put off making her will, she should live ; so in this belief—though fully intending to make what was a very foolish disposal of her and her sister's great wealth—her days passed by, cheerless and alone ; for neither in her young days, nor in middle age, had she sowed those seeds of love which are so divinely fruitful to the old. If we give neither our heart nor our bread, we must expect no return of blessed love.

As the January days grew colder, fresh troubles fell within the mountain village. At Christmas time Mrs. Roden had given a party to little Jane's favourite schoolfellows ; and amongst these, pretty lisping Angelina was the sweetest flower. Even after that she came a time or two, to spend an evening with her little friend ; but one morning she was absent from school, and it was whispered that she was very ill. The rumour only proved too true ; for that afternoon, just as dusk grew, the doctor was heard madly riding up the village street. On the morrow, he rode by twice again ; and when Mrs. Roden sent a friendly neighbour to inquire—for the

distance was too great for her to go herself—the answer brought back was, “the little child is very bad—too bad to live long.” Not three hours from the time this sad message came, the poor heartbroken father drove up in his gig to Mrs. Roden’s gate. Coming up the garden, and shaking off the snow—for it snowed heavily—he tapped, and entered the kitchen, where sitting down, his emotion for some moments did not permit him to speak. At last he said—

“ My dying child—oh, God!—oh, God!—in thy pity spare her!—asks to see her little friend. Nothing else will comfort her but to see thy little one, neighbour: so thou must spare her an hour; and our lad shall drive her back again. Eh, dear!—to see my darling child, with her bits of dolls about her, and t’other things she wishes to give thy little one—would turn a heart of stone! Neighbour—neighbour, God gives us griefs that are often hard to bear!” And the strong man wept with the helpless weakness of a new-born babe.

Jane felt real sorrow for her little friend; whilst Mrs. Roden soothed her own anguish with a deep, imploring prayer—not the less fervent because it was voiceless to mortal ears.

Presently she wrapped Jane up in one of her warmest shawls, and the child went with the good farmer. It snowed on and on ; the wind blew ; the fields and woods were buried in one great wreath of snow—yet the horse moved rapidly, and they soon reached the farm.

In a pleasant room up-stairs, warm with fire and candle-light, the poor child lay a-bed ; her mother seated by her, with her arm about the pillow, and two young brothers, a little older than their dying sister, looking on in wonder and trouble. The bed was strewn with humble toys ;—the doll father had brought from the fair ; the little leaden tea-things mother had bought when she last went shopping to the distant town ; a book of gay pictures, which had come with a fond aunt from London. All these were gathered together for little Jane, for whom the dying child watched, it was plain to see, for her eyes, over which the thickening film of death already grew, rarely left the door by which she was to enter. When she did, the little eager face was lifted instantly off the pillow ; and the small, fevered, wasted hands were held lovingly forth, as far as weakness would permit. Their hands met ; their kisses dropped like honey-dew upon

each other's lips : the angels would have loved such, so innocent were they.

"P'ease, p'ease," whispered Angelina, "I'm never going to school any more—I'm very ill ; God is calling me away ; so you'll take Miss Doll, and be very good to her. I'd like to stay—I'd like you to make me pretty plates and cups, when the fow'rs came again—but I can't ; my eyes can't see—I'm very sleepy, mother !" The mother laid her darling's face upon the pillow—herself almost dying as she did so.

There she lay for some moments passively ; then she weakly drew her mother's hands into her own—blindly felt for those of little Jane,—then, with her sweet face between theirs, her breath passed away : Angelina was gathered to the angels.

Little Jane's first paroxysm of grief was very fearful. She had loved Angelina so well ; the little girl had been her first friend, on the desolate day after her Granny died. At first she would not touch the toys : but when her grief grew less, she gathered them tenderly together in her frock ; and giving her last kiss to the dead, was led away.

When the gig was again at the door, and she

was well wrapped up—for the cold was fearful—the broken-hearted mother said, as she stooped to kiss the child—

“Tell Mrs. Roden thou wilt be ever dear to us, and ever welcome to our bed and board. If she will let thee come to my blessed one’s burial, father and I will never be able to give thanks enough.”

So the little girl was taken home, where there was a renewal of her tears ; and when at last she went to bed, with the toys about her, her night was sleepless. Next morning Mrs. Roden found her worn and ill, partly from grief, and partly from a severe cold ; so she made her lie a-bed. Next day she was ill too,—very hoarse and feverish ; but towards evening she was a little better.

“As thou’rt not so ill as thou wert i’ th’ morn, my dear,” said Mrs. Roden, when she went up stairs after tea, “as it doesn’t snow ; and as, if thou’rt better, thou must go to the poor child’s funeral, I’ll step up to Mrs. Downton’s, and get thee a bit for a black frock, for I’ve no gown I can cut up ; and poor as Cassy’s made me, I can find a mite for those I love. Thou won’t be frightened, child, eh ? for old Pinch can come up, and be beside thee.”

“ No, grandma ; I'll be very still, and never move till you come back. Please take Pincher—he'll be nice company ; and Miss Lisbeth will be pleased to see him.”

“ Well, child, if you're not frightened, I will ; for it's strange how I've grown to love the dog—and a run will do the old fellow good. Now mind thee be still. If a knock come to the door, don't answer it. If thou'rt to be well enough by the funeral, thou must get no fresh cold.”

Little Jane promised ; and the old lady, clothing herself warmly, kissed her and went down stairs. Here she put out the candle—the glowing fire giving light sufficient—called Pincher, and locking the door carefully after her, she proceeded slowly on her way, for the snow was deep, and the night not over bright.

For several previous evenings, her house had been resolutely watched from an ivied gable of the church opposite, by a man and a woman. Now, when they saw the old lady come forth, they came forth too, and followed her at a distance till she was safely housed in Miss Downton's cottage ; they then swiftly returned, and going up the garden path, in the footsteps Mrs. Roden had made, the woman unlocked the door. With

hushed steps they went in ; and fastening the door after them, the woman lighted the candle, and giving it to the man, he went up stairs. He was a strong, rough, brutal-looking fellow, dressed as a tinker or gipsy. Awakened by the ascending steps, little Jane asked who it was—but no answer was returned ; and in another moment the fellow stood by her bed. Terrified beyond expression by his aspect and manner, she shrunk down and began to scream.

“ Hush !” he said, as he laid his hand upon her mouth ; “ none of this. You must get up and come with me. Where’s your clothes ?” But her only answer was a still more terrible cry.

“ Make her cease that—and be quick !” cried a voice from below. So the fellow, drawing her head roughly towards him, gagged her mouth with a piece of wood he took from his pocket. But his movements did not seem quick enough to the woman below, for she came up stairs. Disguised as she was, it was plain to see it was Miss Cassy.

“ There ! never mind clothes ; any rags will do ; for I’ll see she shall take little enough away with her.” So, rejecting the poor child’s ordi-

arments, except her chemise, flannel petticoat and shoes, she looked into an old closet, she knew her mother kept lumber, and hanging on a peg the identical frock, bonnet, petticoat little Jane had worn on the day she left Mrs. Roden's threshold—for the old lady had carefully preserved them for the sake of remembrance—she hurriedly put them on, with many hard words innumerable, both from herself and the man. They then dragged the young woman down stairs.

"Come, be quick," said Miss Cassy, "or the man will be back again."

"It where's the ass, missus? that wur part of the bargain."

"I, yes, I forgot; I want the ugly brute to unhang her for a minute: I'll make her tell where it is."

The only result of little Jane's liberty of choice was to utter imploring cries not to be separated from her dear grandma, with whom she was so happy.

"I dare say; but thou shalt have no more happiness. A tramp like thee has feasted enough on honest folks' bread. Now, tell where's the ass, or I'll strike thee down."

"Oh ! please ma'am, he's in the lean-to, behind the brewhouse. Oh ! please ma'am, let dear old Smoke stop—let me stop—I'll be dutiful to you, ma'am : I will indeed !" And the child gazed upon the woman's face—with a look, pathetic, kindly, imploring—oh ! most wonderful in its depths of human tenderness—which wounded her guilty conscience, as nothing else could do. It seemed to sear her brain, and make her hate the child with a still deeper hate.

"Gag her !" was all she said. And she closed her eyes to shut out the look which so reminded her of those she had injured.

This done, Miss Cassy blew out the candle—dragged rather than led the child from the kitchen ; locked the door, and went round with the man to the rear of the cottage. Here, through kitchen-garden and orchard, ran a path to some solitary fields ; these led to a lane—the lane to the hills ; and as it had begun to snow again, the print of footsteps would be as quickly effaced as made.

Old Smoke's life, like that of the poor child, had been latterly one of great ease and comfort. His little stable in the lean-to was wattled and warm ; his rack full of nice sweet hay ; and

what was more—the child and the old lady had removed a brick or two in the brewhouse wall, so that, through the opening thus made, he had many a kindly pat on the nose, and what was more to the purpose, oftener still, a nice apple, a crust of bread, or a cold potatoe. Indeed the old fellow must have often wondered at his happy lot, of much rest and little work. Perhaps he did, for he often brayed in a sonorous sort of way ; and when he helped Mrs. Roden's good neighbour a little, or carried Lisbeth Downton a few miles, or gave little Jane a ride to school—he did it with a mettle and spirit that showed his heart was in his work. As to his coat, it was becoming thick and glossy ; and all the marks of cruel usage were being rapidly effaced. Indeed, as old William—the man who wrought Mrs. Roden's garden for her—often said, “ Smoke was a donkey whose like in work and spirit you wouldn't see for many a mile.” Thus humanity is a noble thing, whether to men or beasts.

His peace was, however, to rudely end. The man entered the lean-to, put a halter round his neck, and led him forth. He would have set little Jane on the creature's back ; but Miss

Cassy said sternly, "No." So leading both donkey and child, the man went on, followed by his employer. More and more blinding the snow whirled and swirled ; yet they went on as quickly as they could, through field after field, up the solitary lane, into the more solemn solitude of the hills ; and as every footstep fell, it was as quickly effaced.

At length, turning into a copse, partly leafless, partly green with holly-leaves, the man reached a hut, or sheep-cote. Here burnt a fire of sticks —here waited a male companion of his own age, whilst tethered outside stood a donkey. Here, when Miss Cassy had conferred with both, they prepared to go on.

" You're quite sure you know the way, and won't be returning to the village ? "

" I wish I'd a hunder' pounds as sure as I know every bit o' th' way. No fear on us returning. I don't say we'll go on the whole night ; but a mile or two from here is a place among the crags, where we can stop a bit, till th' storm's spent and daylight comes. We'll then get on, missus, across the hills ; no fear o' that, me and Tom 'll be a match to them as follows—if so be they do."

Thus assured, Miss Cassy gave the one man money, and both prepared to go.

“ You’ll get her some work in a pottery town,” she added, in a whisper ; “ she’s been used to that sort of thing.”

“ Ay, ay, missus, we know an old body as ’ll be right glad on her, to bring in a bit o’ wages from the bonk, and right the house besides.” Both men then came forth, untethered the donkeys, and urged them onwards into the waste of snow.

“ There,” said Miss Cassy, as she pushed the weeping child out through the sheep-cote door into the blinding storm, “ never you come into these parts again, or I’ll do worse by you—that I will.”

The poor child could not answer ; but she turned round to look at the evil woman : and there was that in her face, as seen by the glimmer of the fire, which haunted Miss Cassy evermore. It was not an expression of bitterness or hate—it was a look Miss Cassy had seen a hundred times before ; it wounded her more than any expression of anger would have done ; for it seemed to say plainly—“ To thee I shall not do the like : I have eaten thy kindred’s bread ; and pity for thee may repay it to the full.”

Her morbid fancy thus wounding her, the woman trod out the fire, and went her way homewards, as quickly as she could.

CHAPTER VIII.

A POTTERY TOWN.

MORE merciful than the woman whom they served, the men, as soon as they were a little way from the shieling, un gagged and unbound the child, put her on old Smoke's back, and wrapped a piece of sacking round her. She needed this, for her wretched garb was already wet through, and her stockingless feet numbed by the intensity of the cold. When again enabled to speak, she wept and entreated them to let her go back to the dear old lady; but swearing and cruelly threatening her that if she made a noise they would "do for her," she lapsed into silence, though her tears and broken sobs were many.

After finding their baffled way up more than one steep ascent, they reached the limestone crags they sought; and here the men sheltered themselves, as well as the child and the donkeys,

in a sort of natural cave, strewn with withered bilberry leaves and fern, and evidently well known to them, through previous visits. Here they stretched themselves upon the ground and soon slept. But not the child. Ill and cold, and worn with passionate grief, she could make no pillow of the crackling leaves, but bending her face towards her knees, swayed to and fro in her great agony. Thus the night went slowly on towards dawn. As this approached, something all at once leapt wildly into the cave, and with whines of loud joy, began caressing her. It was poor old Pinch, who had thus tracked the donkey's way to this wild place. He licked little Jane's face and hands, he laid his paws on her shoulder, and when, in her bitter grief, she cleaved and talked to him, he gave more than one piteous howl. These aroused the men, who questioning the child, and quickly lighting a lantern they had with them, they drove the dog from the cave with loud imprecations. Patient in his love and devotion, again and again the poor brute essayed to return to her he loved, but driven off still more fiercely, he at last kept in the rear. The dawn now breaking, the men prepared to go. Setting Jane on one of the

donkeys, they drove both forth, and took their way to a distant gorge of the hills. More than once the miserable child caught a glimpse of the poor dog. He tremblingly followed, though at each step growing bolder, till at length being re-espied, one of the men snatched up a large wayside stone, and hurled it after him. It must have struck and injured the poor brute, for, howling piteously, he fled in an opposite direction, and was seen no more.

Avoiding the more exposed parts of the hills, and equally so the more travelled roads, the men made their way as quickly as the depth of the snow would permit, through lanes and over moorland wastes all that day. Making evidently to a certain point, they reached late in the evening, a gipsies' hut, standing on the edge of a solitary common, and here they passed the night. Little Jane was very ill, and for the last two hours of travel she had been unable to sit upright on the donkey's back; but one of the women gave her some herb-drink mingled with honey, pinned an old woollen stocking round her throat, put others on her feet, and made her up a bed in a corner, where, gaining some sleep, she was a little better on the morrow. They travelled all that day

again, and late at night the smoke and flames of the potters' ovens begun to show themselves. Tramping on through a long dirty suburb of mean houses, they turned at last down a filthy ill-lighted lane, where, knocking at a door, they sought entrance. After some delay, an old woman, whom the men addressed by the name of Peg, opened it, and gruffly invited them in, and to the newly-stirred fire. It was clear she was a-bed when they first came, for an old stump bedstead in a distant corner of the mean kitchen had all the appearance of having been lately lain in, whilst her crossness at being disturbed was great.

"There, don't take on, missus," said the elder man, "I've only brought thee the brat I sent thee word of. She's a bit badly now: it's a cold, for the weather's been enough to slay a horse; so thou must coddle her a bit, and get her better. Thou canst then send her to the bonk" (meaning bank), "or do as thou likes't wi' her."

"Ay! she mun work if she stays here; for I'll ha' no nesh or idle wenches." So saying the old woman began to ask questions, which the man would not answer till he had drawn her aside. When their whispers were at an end, all three

partook of some spirits the men had with them, and the latter prepared to go.

“Thou’lt keep her tongue from wagging neighbour, eh ?”

“Ay, or there ’ll be more in this stick ’an th’ look.” And the old woman shook a nobbed cudgel that stood near. The men now advanced towards the door, where outside stood the donkeys.

To the last the poor child had been nursing the hope that the ass would be left too ; but now seeing her error, she sprang forward, as well as her severe sense of illness would permit, and entreated them to leave Smoke. The men, however, only laughed, and banging to the door, were gone.

“Come,” said the old woman, “thou’d best come to bed wi’ me peacefully ; for I’ll ha’ no crying hussies here.” So saying she made room beside her for the child. The bed was very miserable, damp, filthy, and cold, and thither the child crept in terror, but not to sleep. Next morning she was too ill to rise ; so there she lay all day without care or nourishment. At length, taking the warning of a neighbouring gossip, the old woman sent for the parish doctor. This gentleman attending, he said the child was very bad

and must be well cared for, or she would be was himself most tender ; he put on and a blister, and administered medicine. effects of these, rather than any other thing, ally saved the poor child's life, for beyond her a little ill-made gruel, or a cup of old woman did nothing ; but sitting, g, by the fire all day, grumbled bitterly at wing a "sick brat" thrust upon her. ever, she took care to be on the look-out rk, and almost before little Jane had h sufficient, she was sent off to a neighbour-ank," where her duty consisted in carrying on a board on her head from the moulders' rners' shops, to another where they were in earthen cases, or, as these are termed, rs," preparatory to a first burning—after the ware is called "biscuit." Several dozen orked with her. Older than herself, and l, they were always annoying her be- he was so weak and young, and thus her s at work were as great as her troubles at More than this, the hours were long, and our monotonous and severe. The weekly e she earned was exacted to the utmost g ; and when at six o'clock each evening

she bent her steps to the miserable hovel, mis-called "home," it was only to hear bad language and cruel invectives, and to perform menial tasks unfitted to her strength or years.

Thus many weeks went by, and April rains and sunshine were bringing forth the flowers. Few now would have recognized poor little Jane, with her weak step, her broken spirited looks, or in her sordid, whitened rags. Oh! how unlike the little Jane who sat by Mrs. Roden's fire, or who played so merrily on the school-green! One day, whilst at work, a girl, in cruel fun, let a heavy board on her foot. It hurt poor little Jane severely. Whilst stooping to take off her shoe and stanch the blood, a decent woman, who had come into the place on business, ran forward to the poor child's aid.

"Eh, dear! eh, dear!" she said, "this is cruel. The more as thou art such a patient little creature. A neighbour o' mine has told me o' thee times and oft; and as to these big girls, the way they go on is right a sin. But there shall be no more on't if I can help it. I know of a better bank than this, where thou 'll get better wages, and where folks don't treat one another as they do here."

"The old woman won't let me go," wept little

Jane, "I've asked her many a time to get me a new place!"

"I'll see about it; I'll go to her to-night."

"Please don't tell about the hurt. She'll say it was my fault, and won't let me go."

"No, I'll put it all to the wages. She'll let thee go then."

The woman bound up the poor child's foot, gave her twopence, and then went her way. She kept her word, for that night she called at the hovel, and spoke to the old woman. At first the latter was averse to any change; but when her visitor hinted, that "there were folks and things that might come toppling down some day, when t'other folks least expected," she consented, especially as there were larger wages in the case. So little Jane bore on with the rough bad girls till the end of the week, and on the Monday following went to the new "bank" to carry "greenware"—that is, earthenware in an unbaked state.

It was a vast and well-conducted establishment, belonging to one of our greatest English potters. Each department was under judicious control; good wages were paid, and thus a superior class of people were employed. Little Jane liked this

place much better ; and one of the overlookers, soon noticing her diligence, as well as steady hand, spoke of it to others, and the result was, that on the Monday following she was promoted "to carry" for the "throwing shop," that is, the room or place where articles are "thrown" or formed upon the potter's wheel.

For simplicity and high antiquity this process has no likeness in the whole range of the arts. It is mentioned in Scripture ; it was used in Egypt thousands of years before the birth of Christ ; the Greeks, the Etrurians, and at a later date the Romans, alike employed it. Most of the masterpieces of Greek ceramic art were thus formed. The Celtic and Iberian races knew of the potter's wheel, and their civilized descendants in this country used it. The Romans, in the vast potteries they scattered over Britain, were indebted to this beautiful machine ; and it was used alike through the Saxon period as through the Middle Ages, for such circular forms in pottery as the scanty needs of society called for, and the rudeness of the arts permitted. It was improved during the early part of the last century, and is now what it has always been—the choicest aid of the figuline artist.

It consists of a horizontal disc or flat circular surface, standing on a leg or rest, which is made to revolve by a distant wheel, turned by a crank and pulleys. It stands in a sort of trough, through which the leg or rest passes; and before the trough the thrower sits, with his feet so disposed as to regulate his wheel at pleasure. On this flat surface he throws down a ball of clay, ready weighed and prepared for his hand by a woman called a "baller," who works beside him. With no aid but his fingers, a measure, and one or two simple instruments, he forms, whilst his wheel is revolving, and with a celerity that is extraordinary, the choicest shapes imaginable—a jug, a cup, a vase, or basin. His dexterity is wonderful; and to those uninitiated in his beautiful art, he seems to work by the aid of magic rather than human skill.

From the first moment of entering his "shop" little Jane liked Simon Tilewright, the thrower. He was a grave-looking man of perhaps fifty years of age; and though his light-coloured clothes were whitened with the clay he wrought, yet his appearance was most respectable. Rarely speaking, and then only sententiously, you might have thought him as much a machine as the

wheel he sat before, but for the intelligence of his keen eye and the manner he could converse when called upon. Sober, industrious, moral, he never shirked his work or allowed others to do so ; or was bad speech or bad manners permitted near him. He seemed especially esteemed by his employers, who often came in to speak to him ; and earning large wages by his skill and industry, his circumstances were said to be most comfortable. Yet it was whispered that he had known much sorrow, and perhaps its shadows were not all passed away ; for at times a profound melancholy darkened his habitually grave face.

Simon spoke occasionally a kind word or two to the poor shoeless child, praised her industry and carefulness of hand : and thus by degrees Jane's terror at his gravity of demeanour became less. Besides this, the woman who turned the wheel, as well as the "baller," were both civil spoken. But thus as things mended at the "bank," they grew worse in her miserable home. The child's larger wages enabling the old woman to obtain more drink, her conduct towards her defenceless slave became still more brutal. She starved and beat her, often most cruelly ; and to

her day's labour added all the drudgery of their sordid hovel. The only hour of rest and peace was that of dinner-time, when, eating the potatoes she had cooked on the stove, or dipping her dry bread, as she was often kindly allowed, in the "baller's" stew or cup of broth, she sat in a corner, and thought of dear old Mrs. Roden or dying Angelina. These were painful thoughts, yet they were often present, as well as deeply cherished. Little Jane had always had the idea of running away, and nothing but the dread of the unknown road, or of being followed, prevented her.

Summer had now followed spring, and brought with it a great foreign order to this celebrated pottery. Almost all the hands had to work overtime, and Simon Tilewright amongst the rest. Willing to spare even the half-hour which it took him to go to and fro to his hurried dinner, he asked little Jane one day to fetch it. She sought the pleasant little street where his house was, and was surprised to find it so nice a place. The little parlour which you entered first from the street was carpeted, and so thickly hung round with pictures as to leave scarcely an inch of wall bare : there was nice furniture, and

so many knick-knacks in china and other things, as to cover the mantelshelf and fill the recess on either side the fireplace. The kitchen at the rear of this parlour was very comfortable and orderly, and shone brightly in its excessive cleanliness. The little dinner-table was set, the dinner itself was ready, and only Simon waited for.

“ Simon sent for his dinner, eh ?” questioned Mrs. Tilewright, who was a sharp, concise little woman, with a pale face. “ Well, if I trust thee thou won’t undo the cloth, or pick the meat, or meddle wi’ th’ gravy ?”

“ No, I’ve been taught not to touch what isn’t mine.”

“ What’s thy name ?”

“ Jane, ma’am.”

“ Ay ! The master’s spoken of thee as a good child.” So saying, Mrs. Tilewright put Simon’s dinner nicely in a basin ; this in a cloth ; and this again in a basket. She did not give poor Jane either bit or drop, but bidding her run as fast as ever she could, so that “ the master might have his dinner nice and hot,” she closed the door with a cold and stingy hand. Simon, however, made up for his wife’s lack of heart. He got a plate, and shared his dinner with the little maid, and found

her a stool to sit on ; and though his words were few, his manner was very kind. Often he looked at the child—often he sighed—often he lost himself in some dream that seemed his.

Henceforth, whilst the press of work lasted, little Jane fetched Simon Tilewright's dinner. Finding her so trustworthy, his wife's manner softened a little. She had no bounteous or loving heart like Mrs. Roden ; she had indifferent health, and perhaps it was that her affections were frozen up by some calamity. Of this she never made explanation, for, like her husband, she seemed to have set a purposed seal on her lips ; but she was kindly and gentle, and that was much for her. Occasionally the child assisted her in little offices connected with the dinner ; and one day, when she sat in her chair ill, Jane cooked the potatoes, and washed the breakfast-things, for they had been set aside from the morning's meal.

"Thou'rt a tidy little body," said Mrs. Tilewright, "and do things as nicely as ever I saw a child do. Who taught thee ?"

"Mrs. Roden, please ma'am."

Simon's wife made no other reply to this than an angry "pish !" But as this was her way when

she did not like a thing, it was no matter for surprise, or even remark.

When Simon's heavy work came to an end, little Jane ceased to fetch his dinner; but he often spoke a kind word to her, and oftener gave her a penny. In this way autumn passed by, and winter came.

During this latter season Simon returned from dinner one day with a bundle under his arm.

"There," he said, as he undid and gave it to little Jane, "my wife has sent thee her cloak to keep thee warm: for she recollects thee as a tidy little body, and God love her, if she had one like thee, she mightn't be as carking and as harping as she is."

Little Jane was very grateful for the kind gift, for the weather was very cold. But she wore it for two days only: on the third the old woman sold it whilst the child was a-bed, and was never sober so long as the money lasted.

As the winter drew towards a close, there was a talk of moving little Jane to one of the painting shops, for Simon spoke highly of her; and till this was done, her wages were raised three-pence a week. By the advice of her kind friend, the "baller," the child said nothing of this to

the bad old woman at home, but saved it carefully up each week, in order to buy a frock ; the little sum soon accumulated, for Simon's kindly-given penny came often still. By some means or another, however, the old woman got to learn that the child's wages had been raised ; and one Saturday afternoon she bogan assailing her as soon as she entered the door. She used the most dreadful language, she beat her most cruelly, and at last threatened the poor child's life if she did not reveal where the money was hidden. Thus terrified, the child at last produced her poor little hoard from the hem of her ragged petticoat, into which she had pinned it. There were five shillings altogether, chiefly in threepenny pieces. Two of these shillings were sent by a neighbour to buy gin, and with this the old woman made herself tipsy long before evening was come. She sent for more on the morrow ; she drank it till her temper and demeanour were those of a fiend ; and when she found the poor bruised child was making an attempt to quit her horrid abode, she bound her to the bedstead ; and barring the door, for it had not a lock, set herself near to watch. But she did not watch long ; again and again she drank her horrible

gin ; and falling forward on the rickety table she had drawn near, she slept a soddened sleep.

Through the bitter hours of the night and day little Jane had resolved to flee. No matter where she went, so she got from this horrid place. It was now getting dusk again, and the best time to steal away ; so she tried to undo the cord which bound her to the bed ; but it was tied too tight for her fingers to loosen. However, by long and patient nibbling—like the good mouse in the pretty fable—she got free, and stole on tiptoe to the door. She unbarred it, and was lifting the latch, when its creak aroused the old woman. In a moment she sprang up, and tried to seize the trembling child ; but her attempt failed, for even as her fingers clutched the ragged frock, their gripe was unloosened, and she fell forward on the floor as senseless from drink as a stone. The miserable child, thinking only of her escape, drew to the door, and sped on. It was fortunately dusk, so that no one noticed her scared and breathless flight ; and by the time she gained the hilly outskirts of the town, the stars were shining, and the hush of the vernal night lay like a holy presence on the scene.

CHAPTER IX.

FAR AWAY.

It was the fairest part of the American spring—cool, many-flowered, and green. On one bank of a beautifully-winding creek, forming a northern branch of the great river Ohio, the sun was setting on a large assemblage of potters' ovens, sheds, and timber-houses. Though a place not very remote from cities and flourishing towns, and on the water-way of the great American lakes, it wore the appearance of having been reclaimed but a few years from the primitive forest, for a vast tract of woodland surrounded it, and the outlying fields, already green with rich crops of maize and Indian corn, showed by countless rugged stumps how lately the woodman's axe had sounded there.

It was altogether a lovely spot, with great signs of prosperity about it. Now the labours of the day ceasing, with the exception of what belonged to some of the ovens, a man, after a general inspection of the "bank," went towards a timbered house set in a pretty garden on the banks of the river. He was still young, fair, fresh-looking,

and athletic, and wore all the appearance of being an Englishman, which he was. He was a person of substance, general manager of, and chief designer to, the pottery, and to the extent of two-thirds its proprietor.

His house was solitary when he entered it, but he raked together the smouldering wood-fire, put on a tea-kettle, and spread his evening meal. To this he soon sat down, and opening a newspaper which had come during his absence, he sipped his tea and read it leisurely. His meal was near its close when his eye seemed to rest on something which surprised him. In extent it was but a paragraph, but he read it again and again; and at last, when he laid the paper down, it was only to pace to and fro rapidly, as though greatly moved by many varied thoughts. At last he put his meal aside, changed his coat, and went forth to some adjacent houses, prettily situated like his own. They were, however, not solitary; wives opened the doors, children played on the floors, but it was with the husbands and fathers he came to speak. When he had talked severally with these, and arranged divers matters, he repaired to a great wooden store, and here, assisted by a workman, he packed several small but choice

los of earthenware in a basket. He then recd to his home, locked up this and that, took ey and papers, put on his best attire, and at th, accompanied by one of his men, drove in a light cart, which had meanwhile been ng ready. The night was mild and moon. Driving to a distant ferry, they crossed creek, continued their way along the shore, at last, reaching a little town at the conflu- of the creek and the great river, they awaited amer. It came up soon after daybreak, and the lishman, taking passage thereby, was quickly is way to the great lakes and the frontiers of ada. Here he pursued his journey for two by railway, till, reaching a large town, he ed and made inquiries at the station.

No ; Judge Holte was not gone ; but he would is soon as his successor from England had recd."

Was it true that he had become suddenly the essor of a great property ?"

Yes ; this was the reason he and his family returning to their native country. Every was sorry they were going—they were so ved."

. weight seemed lifted off the Englishman's

heart. He thanked his informants, and, going his way, repaired to the judge's house. It was a noble dwelling, built somewhat like a French château, and lying on the outskirts of the great Canadian town, was surrounded by pleasant country scenes. But the Canadian spring is later than that of the south ; so the earth was yet comparatively frost-bound, and many kinds of trees were yet unleafed.

It was evening when the Englishman sought admission to the judge's dwelling. Finding he had dined, he sent in a message. It was courteously responded to, for in a few moments the judge entered the room into which the stranger had been ushered.

“ My name, sir,” said the latter, “ is William Roden. I am an Englishman by birth, and a native of the parish of —, in the county of —. May I ask, without it being considered impertinent, if you have succeeded to a large property there ?”

“ Yes,” replied the grave and courteous gentleman ; “ at least approximately so ; and to me most unexpectedly. The elder lady, Miss Catherine Butler, was found dead in her bed about two months ago, and the younger sister is in such a

state of childish imbecility, that no will of hers would stand good. Luck favoured me. Had the elder lady lived but a single day more, a will would have been made. After putting off the matter day by day for years, she had settled the very next day for her lawyer to come, as her waiting-woman, fearing the loss of a legacy, had at last urged her to the point. But from what the solicitor writes me word, the estates would in this case have been very foolishly disposed of to one or more overgorged charities; whilst reverting to me, their natural and lawful heir, justice only takes the place of some great injustices committed many years ago. It is unnecessary to enter into these. In gaining this property, I succeed simply to what is mine; it permits me to return to my beloved country, from whence, for the sake of bread, I have been a comparative exile many years; and it will enable me to give my large family a nobler education than I might otherwise. As to many things, Mr. Roden, which need setting right, all shall be seen to, for the solicitor writes me word that the power of the waiting-woman I have already mentioned, and of a steward named Hardthorn, has been so great that abuses reign everywhere; and some of these are of a

most iniquitous kind. Amongst the worst has been that of seizing land belonging to a poor farmer named Shelve. On a part of this the steward has established a pottery, in which he is losing money every day, though declaring to the contrary, for he knows nothing of the business himself. He has also, it seems, been using money belonging to his mistresses, but for which he shall be made to account as soon as I become real master of the estate."

"Rightly, sir. A worse man than this never lived. I only know him and the woman too well; but what I have come so far to ask you is this, can you give me any particulars of my poor old mother Jane Roden's death; or, if you cannot, will you inquire for me when you reach England?"

"Dead! are you sure of this?"

"This woman, Cassy, who is my half-sister by marriage though not by blood, wrote me word so. And to other inquiries I made, no answers ever came. I was thus led to think she had written the truth. I only wish it were otherwise, for son never loved mother more: and God only knows what a comfort it would be to me, now the power is mine, to make such reparation as I can for all

the uneasiness I caused her. I only—only fear the hope is too flattering. Mother, child, wife, all gone ! I am indeed alone !” And the strong man, as he thus spoke, showed what his struggle with great griefs had been.

“Did she rent a cottage by the church ?”

“Yes, sir, for many years.”

“Then she is surely not dead, for her name is amongst the list of tenantry sent me only by the last packet. But excuse me a moment, I will consult some papers in another room.” Judge Holte had reached the door, when he turned again, and added, “Did you say you were a potter ?”

William Roden replied, he was. Then he entered into a brief history of his emigration to the United States somewhat more than eight years before that date. How at first he had worked for others in a pottery near New York ; but living carefully and saving money, he was at length enabled to unite with some fellow-workmen in the purchase of a pottery site on a branch of the Ohio, erect the necessary buildings, and begin to work. They had been eminently prosperous ; their improved ware had sold vastly, and had been mentioned more than once approvingly in Con-

gress as an advance of great significance in the arts.

"Now I recollect," said the kindly judge, "your name and that of your pottery were referred to in some commercial treatises laid before me and my brother judges the other day. I must say I should like to see your productions."

The potter's face was instantly suffused with a glow commingled of modesty and pride. He faltered out that he had brought a few small specimens with him, as a proof that whenever Englishmen worked they worked well, and if the judge would honour him by accepting one or more, he should be pleased as well as obliged.

"Thank you. Let us see to the papers first." With that the judge departed, but soon returning, led his countryman into an adjacent room, where sat a sweet English lady, surrounded by a group of young daughters, from eight to sixteen years of age, and three sons, one older and two younger than their sisters. They all listened with interest to the potter's simple story; and the judge, finding the list of his forthcoming tenantry, showed the happy and profoundly-moved son that his dear old mother yet lived, and yet possessed her ancient home. Man as he

was, and standing in the presence of others, some tears trickled down on to his hard-wrought hands. All, then, had not been taken from him! God had been merciful to him, though the disobediences of his youth had been so many! He repented now; he would be good to his mother indeed. She who had been so good and so forgiving to him! Ah, how good! He did not yet dream as to what she had given or what she had gained!

A servant brought in the potter's basket, and its contents were eagerly examined. The articles consisted of vases, jugs, plates, cups, and saucers; and there was a teapot, a sugar-basin, and cream-jug of greater beauty than the rest; and which the potter would fain the lady should accept.

"Not so," she said; "we will carry them for you to your dear old mother, as a little token of her son's great love."

The other things the lady and her daughters gracefully accepted, and this to bear with them to England as specimens of American ware made and decorated by English hands.

Judge Holte and William Roden then conferred together. It was arranged that the former should make many inquiries, and yet be silent as

to his knowledge of the latter to all except his poor old mother ; but *her* heart was to be comforted with joyful news.

“ When I write,” said the judge, “ and tell you all I can learn, lose no time in coming home. But do not give up your business here, even if you take another in the dear old land. Space is bridged over now, and you can be American and Englishman in one.”

So they parted. A week after, Judge Holte and his family were on their way to England, whilst William Roden, at his pottery on the Ohio creek, wrought with new energy, though reckoning the hours till his expected letter came.

CHAPTER X.

IN TIME LITTLE,—IN JOY GREAT.

THE panting and exhausted child, staying at last to gain breath, found that she had left the town far behind, though its lights were yet visible, and that around her lay a country, blackened for the most part by countless coal-pits. The hedges were beaten down, the turf ripped up by wheel-ruts or crossed by tramways : here was a

vast mound of clay or earth, and there an engine-house. In many places were machines called "whimseys," for raising the coals from the pits; there were also other machines called "gins," the great horizontal wheels of which are worked by horses or donkeys. But these were all still on the peaceful Sabbath night; and except for an engine-fire or lights gleaming from a few scattered cottages, the country was as solitary as though man trod it not.

Indeed, there was peace everywhere. Up in the bright sky, where moon and stars were shining so divinely; down on the trodden turf and scrubby hedgerows; whilst the great black mounds seemed to sleep a giant's sleep. Here and there, where the turf was greenest, the poor, ill-used gin-horses and donkeys browsed peacefully. Thus there was hush and rest everywhere.

These had their influence on the miserable child; for when she had rested and looked around her, and wept the last tears of her squalid servitude, she felt as light-hearted and as happy as a bird on the wing. Fearing nothing but to be overtaken, and hoping this way led to the moorlands, she soon sped on again, till presently the

town lay far behind. The pits were fewer, green fields lay beyond, and beyond these again uprose the wilder moorlands.

Resting and going on alternately, dawn at length began to break. It was darker now than it had been heretofore, yet she could just distinguish the last coal-pits as they merged upon the misty fields. These lay close to the road, as well as the gin by which they were worked; and here hard by, with a heavy clog on its foot, grazed a poor ass—a poor, ill-used animal, as even that dull light showed. She was passing it, for fear still haunted her steps, when it gave a jerk to its head, which she instantly knew. With a cry of delight she was in a moment by its side, and in a moment more it was rubbing her shoulder with its head and chin, and giving every sign that it recognized its little friend. We have only to experience what desolation really is, to become conscious what a comfort even a poor animal may be to us in our hour of woe.

“Oh, Smoke, Smoke,” cried the child, “I am so glad to find you! I sha’n’t feel a bit lonely or unhappy now. Dear old thing! we’ll go on together, and find Grandma Roden.”

The ass did not dissent to this, but pricked up

his ears, and gave a little snort, which said "Yes," as plainly as could be.

"Shall we go on?" Smoke gave another snort, and began to draw his heavy clog. Thus freshly made conscious how he was trammeled, as she felt and saw how cruelly he had been driven and beaten, by the scars and bare places on his hide, she could not help saying, as she fondled his poor stricken head once more, "Oh, how cruelly we have both been used, old thing, since we were parted!" as indeed the poor ass had; for the bad men who had taken him from Mrs. Roden, after driving him most cruelly about the country for some months, had sold him to the owners of this pit, where, working in the gin six days out of every seven, he knew little else than starvation, hard toil, and cruel blows.

But there was no time to lose, for the dawn grew. Finding she could not detach the clog, little Jane lifted it up and carried it in her arms; and thus she and the ass went on together. The dusky pits soon gave way to pleasant fields and a pretty brook, which they crossed. Hard by was a haystack, from which the child drew poor Smoke a mouthful of food, whilst hanging on a

hurdle near she found an old halter. This she put on Smoke's neck, and they got on better together.

The sun had risen ; the fields were passed ; a great heathy tract out from which the moorlands rose lay stretched before her. This was dotted at intervals with vast patches of gorse and brushwood. Fearing to be seen and overtaken now the landscape was so clear, or interrogated if she were met, she made her way to a distant patch of gorse, and here, enshrouding herself in its densest part, she sat down to rest. It was lucky she did this, for not long after she heard the loud coarse voices of men passing to and fro, as though in search of something. Once or twice they came quite close to where she sat trembling, but luckily her hiding-place remained undiscovered. At length they seemed to give up their search as hopeless ; and retreating in the direction whence they came, their voices died away.

Now as the day grew, as the sun came forth lovingly, as opening buds and leaves scented with their sweetness the gentle wind, as little insects flitted by, the child felt very happy. She slept, and when she awoke the sun was warmer still. She was very hungry, for she had not

tasted food since the previous day; but hunger was comparatively light to bear now she was away from her horrible tormentor. The poor ass grazed quietly beside her, sometimes coming near to rub her outstretched hands. Thus, as the day grew and waned, it occurred to her that they would travel faster if the ass could be freed of his clog. So she got a heavy stone and beat the link beneath his hoof till it broke. Then she hid the clog in the bushes, and as it grew dusk, led Smoke forth, and went on her way. No one stopped her—no one interrogated her; the great uprising moorlands, with their grassy slopes and crags, came nearer and nearer. The scene was very wild—the place was very solitary—yet its terrors were less than those she had undergone. As she began to ascend towards the bleaker region, a cottage came in sight. Cheerful fire-light gleamed through the window, so she took courage to knock at the door and ask for a bit of bread, for her hunger was by this time very sore. An old woman opened the door and began to question her. The child replied, that she was taking the donkey home.

“Ay, well, thy folks should ha’ given thee bread.” So saying, she was about to close her

door, when little Jane's worn and stricken face met her eye. Touched by this, perhaps, she drew it back, and going to a cupboard hard by, cut a thick round off a large loaf, and returning with it, though grumbling as she did, gave it to the child.

“There, be off, get thee home ; it’s coming on to rain terribly ; I know it by the smoke beating down th’ chimney.”

Alas ! she had no home ! no shelter ! but she would not say so, lest she should be detained. Going forward as well as the growing darkness would permit, she ascended higher and higher the hilly road. The wind here blew keenly, and soon the rain came down, first in great drops, and then heavier and heavier. She could just dimly see some crags ahead, and to these she made, though not reaching them till she was drenched through. But even here there was no direct shelter, but only a leeward protection against the sweeping blast and beating rain. Yet here she had to stand all night, the poor ass beside her. She wept bitterly, she could not help it ; but she said the prayers Mrs. Roden had taught her, and her heart was comforted. Though she knew it not, her troubles were nearly over.

At daybreak she went on, and gained the moorland height. It still rained, though not so heavily ; but all the landscape lay before her in a dense mist. There was, however, a narrow beaten road, a mere sheep-track, along which she kept. It brought her in a little while to some crags. Beneath the narrow shelter of these glowed a small fire, and beside it sat two women, one with an infant. They spoke to the little girl, and questioned her, and when they heard that she was taking the donkey home, they bid her welcome to their fire, as they themselves were going on as soon as the mist had cleared away. Only too glad to be sheltered and to dry her clothes, little Jane crouched by the fire, and in a short time, encouraged by the strangers' apparent friendliness, she lay down and fell asleep. When she awoke, which was in no great while, the fire was nearly out and the women had departed, but not without taking her miserable tippet and bonnet, and her shoes, which were almost new. They had, however, left poor Smoke : he grazed close by, and thus her troubles were not so great as they might have been.

The mist was by this time partly cleared away, and the sun shone out a little, though with that

watery aspect which betokened further rain. Shoeless as she was, she plodded on, and after long and weary walking, the sheep-track brought her to a more open road. Here at a distance she saw a man working, and to him she gladly made, for it was the first person she had seen for some hours, and being neither a tinker nor a gipsy, he might answer her honestly. It was beginning to rain again, and the afternoon was nearly by. When she came up to the man he looked honest and friendly, so she ventured to ask him if there was a moorland pottery anywhere in that direction.

"I know but one," he answered, kindly, as he rested on the spade with which he was mending the road, "and that's old John Tilewright's."

"I don't know any name, please," she answered, innocently, "only that old dad is called John."

"Ay, it be the same, I dur say. His old missis went away a good bit ago, and was never heerd on more."

"Yes!"

"Well, the place is four miles from here, and a bad road too. But where's thy shoes, little one?"

She burst into tears, and told him how and when they had been stolen.

“Ay, I know those women ; they’re part of a bad lot. It’s only a wonder they left thee the donkey.” Then questioning her further, he learnt something of her wanderings, and his heart was touched with pity. He drained his beer-bottle of its last drop and gave her : there was a remaining crust of bread and cheese in his handkerchief, and this he gave also ; and wrapping her up in his coat, he bid her sit a little while till he had finished work.

“In half an hour I shall ha’ done, and then thou can’t come on wi’ me three miles o’ the road ; the rest’s easy enough.”

So she waited ; and when the good man had finished for the day, she went onwards with him. He was kind enough to carry her a long way, for the stones galled and cut her naked feet. Once more it rained heavily, and premature night soon set in.

At the end of three miles, a lesser road diverged from the greater one, and the moorland had become more hilly than heretofore.

“There,” said he, “if thou keep that way, no harm will befall thee, and presently thou’ll begin

to see the lights about the place. I canna go further wi' thee, for my own home's a good bit off. But keep straight and thou'll do ; though thou munna turn aside, for the moor's like a quag wi' the rain." He then bid the child "good-night," and went his way.

But the path was not so easy to keep as the good man had reckoned. Besides this, the wind again blew, and the rain poured down in torrents. Sometimes she wandered aside, and was up to her knees in mud and water, and when she gained the path once more, her strength was spent and her breath gone. At length she discerned a feeble glimmering light through the mist and rain, and now she knew her way. Smoke too seemed to recognize the place and trotted gaily on ; but she could not follow so quickly. Bedraggled, torn, exhausted, drenched, she must have dropped and died had there been many yards further to go. She came to the hollows whence the clay was dug—to the "sun-pans" where it was mixed with water—to the ovens—to the sheds—to the causeway about the dwelling—to the low dilapidated clay-built dwelling itself. She saw fire-light gleaming through the rag-stuffed casement, but she had not strength left to

draw down the string of the latchet of the door. But she beat her hands feebly upon it, and then sank down utterly exhausted on the threshold. She had to beat her hands again and again before the noise was heard, and the door opened, and then a great thick set fellow, half boy, half man, with a kindly, but idiotic expression of face, peered out with a candle in his hand, as though scared at the unusual noise.

“ Ben, dear Ben, it is me, little Jenny ! ” entreated the utterly exhausted child. Again the half-frayed creature peered out as though expecting to see a ghost. But when the child’s voice again met his ear, he looked down, saw at once who it was, and lifted her up in his arms, as though he had been long expecting her, and she was very precious to him. Yet even, as he held her up with dainty care, he peered forth as if expecting some one else.

“ Ben, there’s Smoke, but Granny ’ll never come again. She died long ago, on some hills a great way from here. A dear old lady, named Roden, and whom I called ‘ grandma,’ took me in and was very good to me. But I was stolen away from her, and made to work in a pottery town, where I was cruelly used. I ran away two

nights ago, and have wandered here through all the rain. Take me to the fire ; I am very wet and tired. Please don't fear, Granny 'll never come again !" It seemed a relief to the poor lad to hear this ; for he carried the little maid instantly to the fire, placed her in a great chair before it, then, returning, led in the poor ass from out the storm, patted it with inexpressible delight, closed the door, and then came back to little Jane.

" Eh dear, eh dear !" he repeated, as the tears dropped down his weather-beaten face ; " I thought thou wert never coming, Jenny, dear ! I've been very lonely, and have been looking out for thee a good bit. Eh dear ! I care for nought if thou art by."

" I'm so glad to come to thee, Benny !" she said, as she nestled to the rude arms which encircled her so tenderly, " for thou wert always so good to me. Now, don't cry—don't be unhappy ; we'll go together to grandma Roden, and she'll be very good to us, I know she will."

Though she talked thus, the lad did not seem to listen, but looking at her, feasting his eyes upon her stricken face, crushing up her tiny hands into his much larger ones, he kept repeating, " Eh, dear ! eh, dear ! I ain't in trouble now my little Jenny's come !"

But at length, and not too soon, her utterly outworn condition aroused him to his duty.

“Thou must ha’ something to eat: I ain’t much to gi’ thee; I’ll look in the old canister, may be there’s a bit o’ tea.”

“Never mind, Ben, let me get warm first. Tell me, where’s old dad?”

“He ain’t often home now. He’s took to going wi’ th’ pots hisself; but he don’t often bring back money; he spends it all in drink. So as there was less and less every week to pay ‘em with, Tom and Ned got work elsewhere awhile ago, and there’s nought done now but what I do. We can’t go on so long, our poverty’s worser and worser.”

“Ben! didn’t old dad fret about Granny?”

“Not he—he seemed glad she kept away, I think. She’d been telling him a many years she’d keep away some day for good and all. So he believed it when she didn’t come. He wur only sorry a bit about thee and old Smoke. But as for asking any one about the old missis, he never did.”

Ben would, however, talk no more till he had been hospitable to her he loved so well. So he boiled the kettle, and, hunting about, found a few

spoonfuls of tea, in a rusty canister where the hand of the dead had placed it. This, with bread and bacon, constituted the meal he had to give his little Jane. After she had partaken of it—and oh, how welcome it was!—she tried to talk again, but could not, she was so very spent and weary. So Ben warmed the little truckle-bed in which she had been accustomed to lie, and she went to rest. He then saw to the poor donkey, which all this while had waited with such patient goodness by the door, though eyeing his little mistress and Ben most wistfully, and leading him to a shed amidst the pot-works, gave him a feed of beans, and secured him for the night. Ben then came back to his own poor bed, in a lean-to behind the miserable kitchen.

On the morrow little Jane could not rise. She was ill from ague and a low fever; and though not dangerously so, the disease was lingering and most prostrating. Yet, through the many days and even weeks these symptoms lasted, the poor lad's unwearied goodness to the little girl was beyond all praise. Dull and awkward as to all other things, his tender and delicate anticipation amounted almost to genius where she was concerned. He washed her poor rags, and swept

the house ; he roasted her a chicken, and baked her little loaves of bread. More than once he took a load of pots on Smoke's back down to a distant village, and selling them at any price, brought back little comforts for her. All these things and many more he did without a murmur or a word ; and this in the intervals of his hard daily toil of digging and preparing the clay, and moulding, throwing, and burning the coarse earthenware.

Time went by, and yet little Jane did not grow stronger, and rarely left her bed. But one sweet day in early June, a pedlar woman coming to the house to buy some pots, spoke of certain common herbs, which, if prepared, and their decoction drunk, the child would speedily recover. So the simple medicine was made and taken, and soon its good effects were visible. Her strength returned, her appetite grew, she got up each day, and sat in the warm sunshine ; or when Ben had time, she rode a little way upon the moor, on Smoke's back. Everything was at its loveliest now. The larks carolled in the blue sky ; the fern and sward were brightly green ; the little springs trickled on and on, with silvery sounding gladness ; a few scattered flowers were

all a-blow in the pottery garden, and even the little clay-built rotting tenement itself looked cheerful in the summer's sun.

Through the evenings little Jane lay on the settle, and she and Ben talked together. Over and over again she told him about Mrs. Roden; how she had called her "grandma;" how much she had loved her; and she ever ended by saying, "When old dad comes back, or sells the 'bank,' or dies, or something happens that we may leave, we will go together, taking, be sure, old Smoke, and find out 'grandma,' and she will be very good to us." And Ben, who implicitly believed everything the child said, and who would have gone with her barefooted to the end of the world, always answered, "Yes, we will."

One night when they had been talking, as usual, of Mrs. Roden, Ben said to her—

"Jenny, I think that must ha' been the name o' thy mother; for it was one the old master and missis often mentioned when they wur speaking of her. I'd just been apprenticed to master from a Union House a good bit from here, when thy mother came. In a day or two after thou wert born—and she died. From what the old master ha' dropped since the missis went away, it 'pears

she came from Liverpool, where she'd gone with her husband to sail for America ; but when they went to take their passage, they had not money enough for both. So he went, and she coming here, died, as the old master says, from want of the doctor coming in time when she lay bad. They wrote to the husband, and said his wife had died, and thou, too, for the old missis thought to rear thee, and make thee useful. And this they did, poor Jenny !”

“ Eh ! Ben,” wept the child, as she nestled to the poor rude arms of her faithful friend, “ but for thee I must have died many a day ago !”

“ Ay, little one, I shielded thee from many a blow, and hungered that thou might feed ; and it wur nought enough, I loved thee so !”

“ Benny,” she said again, as she laid her cheek upon the tender hands. “ Where is the box thou used to say was my mother's ?”

“ It's up in the old chamber, just where it always stood. But old master ha' rifled it pretty well, as I think I told thee when thou first came. One by one he took the things away wi' him to sell for drink, till there's nought left but a few old letters, some of which came here after she died. Eh ! dear, that drink ! it's a pity the old

master's took to it so shockingly ! The last time he went he took off the clock in th' cart wi' him."

But the child was not thinking of the old man's sins, but of her dead mother. "Ben," she asked presently, "fetch thou the old letters : I can't read much, but I may know a letter here and there."

Her word was law—he loved her so ; so he shuffled up the rude ladder to the chamber above, and soon came back with the tiny bundle of mildewed letters, tied together by a tress of the dead woman's hair. This was all the box held —all ! all !

They looked through them, and held them together to the candle, but as Ben could not read, and the child but imperfectly, they could only make out a superscription or two, and this only letter by letter. Thus they deciphered "Mrs. William Roden to"

"Oh, Ben !" said the child, "If Roden was my mother's name, it must be mine ! Only think of its being the same as that of the dear old lady who took me in and gave me bread. Only think !" Then as he was silent, she spelt out again, "to the care of John Tilewright. . . ."

"That's master's name," interrupted Ben.

“And it was the old thrower’s who was so good to me. Ben, I was telling you of him yesterday.”

“Most likely he’s master’s brother. I’ve often heard him say he’d one living in the Potteries. But they hadn’t been friends for many years, for they’d quarrelled when young men about this very pot-work and its bit o’ land. What’s more, it may be thy mother was old Simon’s daughter, for master ha’ said more than once that she wur a relation to him, but having quarrelled wi’ her own folks, when she married, she wouldn’t go to ‘em when thou wert born.”

“Well,” replied the child, “I liked old Simon, but I like ‘grandma’ Roden much better. I should like to be her little girl—I should indeed.”

“Who knows?” replied Ben. “Strange things often happen.” Saying this, he would talk no more, for he saw that she was very tired.

It was two days after this, and the loveliest summer weather. All the wide moorland and its crags were flooded by the great glory of the sun. The wild flowers were gay with blossoms; all the bees were abroad; and countless insects flitted up and down on happy wings. When he left off work at noon, Ben had taken his little

favourite a ride on old Smoke ; after that he had given her two eggs, which the old hen had kindly laid that morning, for her dinner ; and now before he went to work again through the long afternoon, he made her lie down on the settle, for as yet she was but weak. So thus lying with the sunlight streaming through the open door, she fell asleep, and dreamt such a pleasant dream. She thought she was with Mrs. Roden, and putting out her arms to embrace and kiss her—really did so. She started—she awoke—she found it was no dream. Bending over her stood the dear old lady ; close beside her a well-dressed man ; not far off was poor wondering Ben ; and just outside the door waited the gig, in which the strangers had arrived. In a moment she was gathered to the heart of her, Who in pity had given Bread, who in return had gained great Love.

CHAPTER XI.

FRUIT.

As soon as the kind Canadian judge arrived in England, and had seen his lawyers, he travelled down into the distant county where his forth-

coming estates lay. When he had taken, for a temporary period, a house as near to the ancient hall as possible, and arranged things for the reception of his family, he went on his mission to Mrs. Roden.

The summer's evening was on the wane as he opened the wicket and stepped along the shadowed path beneath the great walnut-trees. There were shadows here, there were shadows on the house, there was a greater shadow within—that lying on a mourning and solitary heart. No door stood open now, no gleam of fire or candle, no pleasant tinkle that bespoke the progress of the evening meal.'

When the gentleman had knocked a time or two, some feeble steps were heard within, then a bolt was withdrawn, the door was opened, and an old gentlewoman, looking ill and careworn, stood before him.

"I beg your pardon, sir," she said, as even in the shadows she saw intuitively the quality of the stranger, "but I have been ill, and am thus slow of foot and hand. Walk in, sir, you don't disturb me."

"I am the bearer of good news," he said, cheerily, as, descending the steps into the kitchen, he deposited a small package on a side table.

There, don't be agitated—don't tremble ; let me sit down and I will tell you."

"Is it of my little Jane?" she asked, as she spread out entreatingly her trembling hands.

"No, I know no such name. My own is Holte ; I am Miss Isabella Butler's heir-at-law. I landed from America three days ago ; and now—don't be agitated—I bring you good news of your most worthy and dear son."

"My God," she said, with faltering lips, "thou art good indeed to thy poor servant ! Go on, sir—be quick, sir ! Oh it is so very, very long since I had tidings of my poor Will ! Eh, dear ! I knew my lad loved his old mother, though he never wrote to her."

Mr. Holte took no notice of these last words, but gently and at once told her all he knew of her son, and dwelt with praise upon his manly presence, and of his worthy sustainment of the character and name of Englishman.

She listened with a rapt ear. Her heart drank of these living waters, and yet thirsted anew.

"You say," he said presently, "that you never heard from your son—how is this ? He often wrote to you, but he never received a reply ; indeed he never had but one letter from this place, and that was from his sister-in law, Miss Cassy,

acquainting him with your death. This he believed till he came to me, and I showed him your name upon the list of tenants."

"Dead, sir ! Cassy is more base than even I believed. But you do not know my other great trouble in my loss of little Jane, as I have reason to think my dear son's child. Eh, dear sir ! you know nothing of my solemn sorrow, my dreary home, my hopeless life, my months of weary sickness !"

"No ; tell me. Your son told me his child had died."

"I have reason to think it didn't, sir, and that the precious little one to whom I gave my bread, owned my name and blood. But let me tell my story."

Speaking thus, Mrs. Roden told, in her homely way, the history of little Jane, and how cruelly she was taken from her.

"Oh that fearful night, sir," she added, "when I came home and found the room and bed empty—when I knew I was desolate—when I thought no little voice would speak lovingly again—when no little hands would tend me tenderly ! Till then I had only imagined that the child was related to me—now she was abducted, I was positively

certain she was my Will's child; but I could elicit no evidence to that effect, though I learnt enough, to assure me that Cassy was the cruel cause. Other inquiries were also made and money spent in vain. Mr. Helsby, our good vicar, took much pains in the matter, as did also Miss Downton, but uselessly. And as for me, I fell ill, and had a long and weary illness, from the effects of which I have never recovered. As to Cassy, she has never been near me, for she pretends to resent the imputation laid on her in relation to the abduction of the child. But if she thus set the hand of sorrow on me, verily has disappointment been hers. I am told her bitter rage knew no bounds when, through her mistress' sudden death, she lost her long-expected legacy. But she vows she will make the matter straight some other way."

"We shall see," interrupted Mr. Holte, sternly; "we shall see."

"Well, sir," continued the old lady, "she keeps up her spirits pretty well, for she is weak enough to believe—though nobody else does—Hardthorn's flourishing accounts of the coal-pits in which he is a shareholder, and of the pottery he has established on poor Oliver Shelve's land.

He is also building a 'stone-fronted' cottage, wherein she hopes to reign as mistress at no late day, though at the same time she shuts her eyes to the fact that he is borrowing her savings at a fearful rate."

"Yes," said Mr. Holte, "I have been learning all this, and much more. But let us drop the subject for to-night, and let me close my visit with things of innocence and peace. Your son loves his old mother dearly, and will soon be here, so be happy till then, for he will know surely where to seek his child. Keep profoundly silent my visit and its good tidings, except to friends you can trust, or you may frustrate the ends of justice. In a day or two I will see you again. And now let me consign to you a little gift from your good son."

As he spoke thus, Mr. Holte placed in the aged woman's hand the parcel he had brought. When he had explained to her what it held he withdrew, blessed by her grateful thanks and blinding tears.

Once more alone, she shut her shutters, lighted a candle, and by the sanctity of her hearth beheld her dear one's gift. Beautiful it was, and richly painted; none but an artist's pencil had

dropped the flowers. She boiled her kettle, made tea in the teapot, and put milk and sugar in the respective vessels. She tasted—she drank—in her joy she had a balm for woe. Drop by drop she tasted, as a bee the honey-dew of love. She would wait, she would trust, she would mourn no more! Even old Pinch wagged his tail as he stood beside her.

Acting upon Mr. Holte's advice, Mrs. Roden kept her good news about her dear son a profound secret from all but Mr. Helsby and Miss Downton. These kind friends were indeed rejoiced, more particularly when they learnt that Mr. Holte had written to William Roden, and summoning him to England—arranged that his mother should await his arrival at Liverpool.

As soon as he and his family were settled in their new abode, Mr. Holte made it a daily duty to visit poor, old, bedridden, desolate Miss Isabella. At first Miss Cassy opposed these visits; but when she found opposition useless, she sullenly gave way. The poor childish lady was herself at first timid and shy; but Mrs. Holte's tender and patient goodness, and the winning manners of her girlish daughters, soon won their way; and soon the poor bedridden

lady began to count of her relatives' daily visits as the one sweet drop in the dull round of her daily life. By degrees they elicited the reasons of her dread of her waiting-woman ; Cassy had in secret buffeted and spoken insolently to the hapless lady ; and for years, by an atrocious system of tale-bearing, had often and often set strife between the sisters. Thus Isabella, when Catherine praised her favourite, never responded. As soon as Mr. Holte learnt these things, he resolved Miss Cassy should go ; but he was tender and patient in the matter, for he did not like to sever too harshly the tie between the aged lady and the servant to whom she was accustomed.

At the time appointed Mrs. Roden, locking up her house, and leaving old Pincher in the care of her kind neighbour, went her quiet journey to Liverpool, attended by Mr. Helsby's confidential servant. Here she had the unspeakable joy of meeting her dear son, well in health, and so prosperous in circumstances, that she would never know need again. After spending two days in quiet communion, they made their way to a certain town in Staffordshire, and thence took a gig to the moorlands, it being William

Roden's impression that something concerning his child would be learnt there.

Starting very early on the summer's morning, the great moorlands were before them ere the day was near its prime. A great region of rocks and mossy sward bounded the horizon, the larks were up in the blue sky, singing of love and summer, and the grasshoppers chirped in the crisp grass, and skipped into fresh ambush as the gig sped on. But neither of the travellers had an eye for nature ; their hearts hungered for higher things.

"Oh ! that we may gain tidings of our little Jane," reiterated the old lady. "Oh ! that I may see her, to whom I gave my bread !"

The father's heart said the same thing, though it was unspoken by words.

As afternoon approached they could see the old pot-work in the distance, and the hearts of both became still more anxious. So anxious were they that at last their fear ripened into dread. This the more, that the house seemed solitary ; there was no sign of human presence—within, without, or around.

When William stayed the gig upon the trampled sward beside the pot-work, he saw that his

mother was weeping, though softly to herself So bidding her calm herself, and he would venture in and learn the dreaded, "No," he got down, and entering the nearest shed, looked about him. There was no one there, but in that adjacent he saw before him a loutish-looking lad, turning a heavy wheel, and making such a din therewith as not to hear the entrance of the stranger. At last, when he was spoken to, he looked round.

"Is there a child here?"

"Ay, master, there's little Jenny, and bad enough she's been." Then suddenly recollecting himself, he added, in an agony of fear,—"But dunna take her away, master: Lord love thee, she's all I have!" As he said this, poor Ben came running towards the door, as though to shield his darling.

"Be in no fear, Ben," said the kindly stranger, as he laid his hand upon the poor lad's shoulder. "I have heard of you, and know how good you have been to Jane. Let me see her. Where is she? I am her father."

"She is in the kitchen, master," and the boy moved as though to lead the way, but the father stepping quickly on before, hurried to the house,

entered through the open door, and saw his child asleep upon the settle. With hushed step he stole forward, knelt down, and pressed his lips upon her forehead. She was dreaming, yet *his* precious kisses did not awaken her.

“My God,” he said, with faltering tongue, “for what thou hast thus preserved for me, I will thank thee till my last hour!”

When his deep emotion was a little stilled, he went forth to his mother, and assisting her to alight, led her in. It was her living voice of which the child dreamt; it was her kisses which awakened her!

When the first excitement of meeting was over, and they had partaken of such poor refreshment as the house afforded, inquiry was made for old John; but he had been away from home many weeks now, and Ben could not even guess his whereabouts. However, the good lad set off that very evening to seek him, and returned with him next day, a miserable, decrepit, drunken, ragged old man. Ben had found him in a village ale-house not more than five miles off; his cart and horse sold, his pots gone, the clock he had carried off from home disposed of, no one knew where, and but a penny and a tobacco-pipe in his pocket.

When confronted with William Roden and the old lady, he was heartily ashamed of his degraded position, and readily stated all he knew of little Jane's mother. She had come to him and his wife unexpectedly, not liking to go to her own parents, because they had harshly, as she thought, disapproved of her marriage, and there falling ill some few hours after, died before a doctor could reach her, in that wild and far-off place. At first they had no thought but to tell of the child's birth, but presently the old woman suggested, that for the sake of the dead woman's few clothes, and more particularly for the reason, that by-and-by the child might be made useful to them, they should write to the father, and say she had died soon after her birth. This wicked act they accomplished, and the truth would never have been known but for the guiding hand of the Providence who ruleth all things. As past misdeeds are irrevocable, William did not say much to the miserable old man, more particularly as he had always been much kinder to little Jane than his cruel and ignorant old wife.

Spending the night as they best could, in so sordid and dirty a place, William and his mother, accompanied by little Jane, set off next morning

to the pottery town to see Simon Tilewright and his wife. This was indeed a different journey to the poor child, than when a few weeks before she had travelled the same road, friendless, wretched, and alone. Now she sat between her two dearest friends propped up by a pillow, and wrapped in a warm shawl; and instead of plodding on with wounded and weary feet, a swift-going gig bore her over the crisp turf, and through the pleasant sunshine. Jane remembered every inch of the road, and as her sorrows were thus brought freshly to her mind, she cleaved closer and closer to her dear and happy grandmother.

Just as the gig was beginning its slow descent to the lower country, Jane's quick eye detected a man at work in the distance, whom she instantly recognized.

"Father," she exclaimed, "there is the very man who carried me three miles on my way to the pot-work, a while ago."

The father made no other reply than to turn the gig aside in the direction the man worked. When it reached the place, he stayed.

"My friend," he said, "do you remember being merciful to a forlorn child?"

"Not much o' that, sir," he said, wiping his brow, "the heart must be hard that hasn't pity for a little one. She got safe, I hope, for the night was a terrible one. If I had been by that way I should have asked after her, but I haven't."

"She got safe, friend, though she's been ill ever since. She's here, you see, but a frail thing. She remembers you well, and thanks you heartily, as I do, who am her father. And here, my friend," he added, as he handed the man five shillings, "is a trifle for your acceptance, though I am not the man to think that blessed charities of this sort can be paid with money. Now good day ; we've some distance before us, and recollect that if ever you want work or a friend, I shall be heard of at . . . in the next county, my name being William Roden, a potter by trade."

Not staying to hear the poor fellow's grateful thanks, William retraced his way, and descending leisurely the mountain road, soon reached the lower country. Here they passed the solitary cottage where little Jane had begged some bread, and by-and-by reaching the region of coal-pits, they saw the gin from whence poor Smoke had had so happy an escape. Evening had come when they entered the pottery town,

and here, alighting at an inn, William took his way to Simon Tilewright's, whilst Mrs. Roden, putting her darling to rest on a sofa, went forth to purchase her some ready-made apparel, wherein she could appear decent, were they summoned to see their relatives.

Simon had just changed his coat, and sat down to tea, when some one knocked at the front door.

"I wonder who that can be?" said his wife, testily, for her humour had of late not improved, "it's no one particular, I dare say, and surely when folks are at tea, they might come round to the back door."

"I don't know," replied Simon, dispiritedly; "few come to our door that we care for. Those days seem gone." And without saying more, or attempting to rise, he sank again into taciturnity.

The knock was repeated, and then some one opening and closing the front door, crossed the parlour, entered the kitchen, and the old thrower and his wife behold a good-looking, well-dressed man before them.

"Beg pardon, sir," began Simon, as he rose to greet the stranger.

"No pardon, Tilewright, but a kindly word: I'm William Roden."

"And—and . . ." began both, as they pressed eagerly to where he stood. They could say no more, but he understood the question they had no voice to utter.

"Leah! Perhaps you know, perhaps you guess—that . . ."

"That she died," interrupted and repeated Simon. "Yes, it was rumoured so, by the friends of a man who went to America, and who wrote home, that he had heard of your living in a distant part, prosperous, but widowed. Yes! this has been a shadow on our souls, the more that we parted with thee in anger, and that . . ."

"That the man you would have had Leah marry proved, after all your heartburnings on his account, a knave."

"Worse than that, William, a hypocrite and a swindler. His fine draper's shop was filled with other people's goods, and he decamped from the town in everybody's debt. Ay, William, thou must forgive us, and now tell us . . ." Again old Simon stopped, his lips could not utter the question on his tongue.

"Poor Leah. Oh! it is a bitter story! Some months after your quarrel with us on account of our marriage, I heard of work in the United

States, and thither we resolved to go. We therefore sold what we had and took our way to Liverpool, but when we got there, our scanty means would not provide a passage for both. I would not write to you, or to my mother, on account of Cassy, so I persuaded Leah to stay behind, and going to you for a time, await the birth of her little one. But this she refused, though consenting to go to her uncle's on the moors. I parted with her. I wrote to her as soon as I landed in the United States: again and again I wrote; but when an answer *did* come, it was to say that my beautiful young wife as well as her little one were dead! Fancy what my grief was! What heart had I to write, or to return home! More particularly when my evil sister-in-law wrote to me to say, that my mother was also dead. It was only slowly I recovered from my great griefs, and strove to master them by earnest work. I was prosperous: I became a comparatively rich man; though I might have still lived on in solitude but for a circumstance which led to my acquaintance with a gentleman, who, succeeding to property in my mother's parish, would be speedily on his way to England. From him I learnt, that my dear old mother was

not dead, and when a week since I landed in this country, I learnt the probability that my child was living, though cruelly used, and sent upon the tramp”

As this was said, Simon staggered forward, and laid his hands on William’s shoulder.

“God forgive me,” he whispered, hoarsely, “I have indeed sinned! Nature whispered to me, but I would not listen. Missis, the little one was ours; we may well bow our heads in shame and mourning.”

“No mourning, Simon, but joy! When little Jane ran from her cruel persecutor, she made her way to old John’s on the moor, and there only yesterday we found her, slowly recovering from a severe illness.”

“Let me go to her,” said Simon, hastily, and weeping as he spoke, “let me go. I repent I do indeed, and thou must be forgiving William, that I overstrained my duty. Let me go to the child, my heart always yearned to her, it did indeed! Eh, missis, to think that we should have turned our Leah’s little one from our door!”

“You have not far to go, Simon,” said William, “she and my old mother are at an inn no great way off. If you’ll come with me, you shall carry her

bither ; and if your wife will give us tea, we'll be thankful."

"Tea !" ejaculated Simon, " thou'rt welcome, lad, to all we have. Missis, set on the kettle freshly, and put out the best crockery. Will's mother and the little one shall not complain of their welcome."

"Well ! I am glad," spoke at length the frigid little woman, " for Jane's as nice and tidy a child as though I'd reared her."

Simon and his son-in-law set forth at once, and most affecting was the meeting between the latter and little Jane.

"To think," he said, penitently, " that I should ha' made thee, my little Jane, a beast of burden. Eh, dear, I'll never forgive myself that ! But the future shall make amends, for Simon has wherewith to give his little one, as well as a fond old heart which needs a treasure !"

Clad in her new-bought attire, and carried tenderly in Simon's arms, little Jane entered once more the thrower's home. Here Mrs. Tilewright heartily welcomed her, as well as dear old Mrs. Roden, and made tea in great state in her second-best silk gown, and used silver spoons and real china.

It was such a happy night to all, that the hours had as though wings, for they talked of countless things. The bad old woman, who had used the poor child so cruelly, was found dead in her hovel a week after the child's flight : she had drunk herself to death. She was thus removed from earthly punishment, but it was as well, for as William Roden said, "we have all of us need to let by-gones be by-gones."

After entertaining his relatives a full fortnight, Simon obtained a week's leave from his masters ; and, accompanied by his wife, Mrs. Roden, and little Jane, returned with William to the moorlands. Here there was a reconciliation between the brothers, and much family communion. At length it was settled that the pottery should be pulled down, and the site let for a colliery ; and that old John, going to board with some strict and sober people in a village not far off, who knew him well, and who would restrain his wandering and dissipated propensities, should be allowed a reasonable weekly income. Simon agreed to give up his work at the close of the year, and remove with his wife to Mrs. Roden's village, so as to be near his little granddaughter, and at hand, should Hardthorn's necessities compel him to relinquish

what he had so unjustly acquired. In this case, Mr. Holte had already offered to arrange with William Roden for the ownership of the pottery, provided Oliver Shelve were willing. There was another arrangement, which gave great joy to little Jane :—as soon as the pot-works were closed, poor Ben and old Smoke were to follow to the mountain village, and know, for the future, no hardships or cruel wrongs.

Thus the relatives parted : and very early on a fine July morning, little Jane and her father and grandmother set off to their home. Oh ! what a happy day it was to the happy child ! All day they journeyed, travelling some miles by railway ; and late that night reached the village. Little could be seen or done then. But oh ! next morning ! Was there not old Pinch, with his glossy coat and flowing tail, to fetch home ? was there not dear Lisbeth to see ?—the school-house, the brook, the garden ? And was there not some tears to drop over Angelina's mossied little grave ? Ay me ! Our tears and smiles are one !

Two nights previous to this return Mr. Hardthorn had paid Miss Cassy a visit ; and there, by dint of extraordinary promises, and flourishing

accounts, that hundreds and hundreds of pounds would be in his purse the following week, he succeeded in obtaining from her her last twenty pounds. Very reluctantly she parted with the sum—for she had begun to have her suspicions and fears; but Mr. Hardthorn's suggestion, "that they might just as well be married pretty soon, for there was next to nothing to be got in the place now," quieted her; and they parted upon the agreement to meet on the third evening, at his, Mr. Hardthorn's house, where tea should be nicely prepared by five o'clock; and where after it, "they would settle accounts, and arrange their affairs for good and all. And don't, my dear," said the steward, as he made his last bow, "expect to see me to-morrow or next day, for I shall be busy with so much money coming in; but on the day after, I shall expect thee."

Thus looked forward to, the day arrived; and Cassy, having attended to her mistress, came down into her own room to fetch some needle-work. It was about ten o'clock in the morning; and as she stooped to the ancient window-seat to reach for something, some one spoke to her through the open window. She looked up, and there stood her friend the postman, with a letter for

her in his hand. His face was very pale, and his manner very confused. At his own request he came in ; and they were closeted for a long while. When at last he went, there she still sat, in the chair where he had left her, like one turned to stone.

“ William come—and that child back again !” she kept repeating to herself. She was aroused at last by the temporary entrance of a servant ; and her attention thus directed to the letter—yet unread—she tore it open. Its contents surprised her ; but did not seem unwelcome. It was from Mr. Holte’s attorney in the county-town. It said, “ that circumstances which would doubtless be known to her in a few hours, having unexpectedly revealed the base part she had acted in the Misses Butler’s affairs, she was ordered to quit the hall that day, at an hour not later than five o’clock, P.M.”

“ Well,” she said, impudently and aloud, as though she had certain hearers present, “ I suppose the old woman and her son will make too much rout about that child for me to stay ; so I may just as well go first as last. Lucky that Hardthorn and I are going to be married so soon. I’ll lose no time : old Kate’s things are

already packed ; and now I'll go and see about Isabella's. She's got some laces I've long wished to lay my finger on ; and she keeps the key of the drawers always in that old bag of hers, beneath the pillow : but I'll have it, come what will. I've had little enough for the long years I was their slave and servant."

She lost no time in going upstairs to her mistress's chamber ; but to her dismay, two of Mr. Holte's young daughters had entered the house by the garden entrance, and now sat with Miss Isabella. All the morning Cassy waited, hoping they would go, but they did not, so she employed the interval in packing up such other portions of the poor lady's wardrobe as she wished to make her own. At noon she carried up her mistress's early dinner: still the young ladies were there ; but some time after this, the aged gentlewoman falling asleep, they took the opportunity of going down stairs, and forth on to one of the adjacent terraces, for a little air. Watching her opportunity —as a cat a mouse—Cassy glided in, and, going up to the bed, sought to take the old-fashioned bag from beneath her mistress's pillow. But it was too tenaciously guarded.

"What do you want?" asked the poor lady awaking partially.

"There ! open your eyes," spoke Cassy, with coarse rudeness, "they're driving me forth from the house like a dog. There ! I'll tell no stories to a child like you. I want what I've long coveted. Give me the key of the drawers in the 'blue room.' "

"No, no ! I can't," pleaded the poor lady, clutching at the bag, as a child its doll—"I can't spare the key. I've kept it a long time. The drawers hold the veil and dress I should have worn sixty-two years ago, had not my dear Sir John been so suddenly killed whilst hunting. Oh spare me !—spare me these a little while !"

But Cassy was deaf to all appeal. She snatched the bag so roughly from the poor lady's supplicating hands as to hurt them, and then poured out the contents upon the bed—the contents she had so long coveted to see ! There was the poor lady's gold vinaigrette, her needle-book, the miniature of the handsome gentleman she had loved so long and well, some little faded ribbon he had given to her, and the key.

"Don't take my marriage-veil, Cassy—don't, don't," supplicated the aged child ; "spare it me a little while !"

But she beat back the wasted pallid hands, took up the key, and went.

She hastened to the "blue room," which was not far off. The drawers were very high, and like ancient things of that sort, divided in their midst. The lace, she knew, was in a topmost drawer; so dragging a table near, she mounted it. She unlocked the drawer: it only opened a little way; she put in her hand; she could feel the rich lace: in her mad eagerness and greed she clutched at the drawer too forcibly, and in a moment the topmost part of the heavy piece of furniture swayed over, and bore her down beneath it with a crash that shook the ancient hall to its foundations.

At the same instant as the young ladies returned and found their aged relative recounting her loss and weeping bitterly, this noise met their astonished ears. They rushed with the rest of the household to the "blue room," and saw what had occurred; and when the piece of furniture was lifted off, Cassy was found beneath it frightfully wounded and insensible.

When, after the lapse of many hours, she recovered her senses, she was in a village cottage, whither she had been removed. Her eyesight was gone for ever, her hearing partially so; and days after it was broken out to her that Hard-

thorn had absconded the very night he obtained her last money, and that she was a beggar except for the bounty of her injured relatives!

CHAPTER XII.

A MIRROR OF TIME.

Who is the pretty maid that trips across the brook this summer's morn, with her pitcher and her dog? It is Mrs. Roden's treasure—her darling Jane. She lives near at hand with this dear grandmother and her kind father, in a charming rustic house the latter has built, and having been across the brook to carry her grandmother Tilewright some milk, lifts up her pretty dress for fear of wetting it. Is she not lovely? and has not old Pinch grown quite handsome? He has; but you should see old Smoke, he is *so* sleek and glossy.

Miss Isabella has been long dead, and Mr. Holte makes a noble owner of his vast estates. Most of his beautiful daughters are married. There is a new school-house, and a new school-master and mistress, and a new postman, for the worthless one who kept back William Roden's

letters to his mother was dismissed many and many a day ago. Miss Cassy is yet alive, a blind, half deaf, and helpless creature—an object for pity, not scorn. Her temper is too intolerable for her relations to bear with; so she lodges in the cottage of a poor widow, who waits upon her. Here, thankless and unforgiving, she eats her daily bread, and forgets that those she most injured are her warmest friends. No one is kinder to her than Jane; but though she carries her fruit and flowers, and countless other things, has rarely other reward than bitter words. But Mrs. Roden bids the little maid not to care, for duty must be done for its own sake, not for what may come of it.

Oliver Shelve is now a substantial farmer. Assisted by a generous loan from Mr. Holte, he has raised the produce of his farm, rebuilt his house, and paid off all his liabilities. He lives with his dear mother still. He has sold his land about the old school-house to William Roden and Simon Tilewright, both of whom, in partnership, carry on an extensive trade in coarse earthenware goods. William is often away in America; but Simon and Ben together see to everything, for Ben lives with Mr. and Mrs. Tilewright, and, next to their pretty granddaughter, is their most

regarded friend. Miss Downton is still alive, and an example of cheerful faith in old age. Little mamma has given up her shop, and tends wholly on her declining sister, and both have a high reward in seeing the well-doing of their darling child. Brought up only to hope and expect humbly, young Lisbeth's fortunes outgrew their modest desires. She is happily married to a physician of good practice, a relation of Mr. Helsby's, and lives not far off in a great manufacturing town. She comes often to see her dear aunt and her mother, and never forgets to pay a visit to Jane and Mrs. Roden, who is, as all say, the truest, the kindest, the most loveable old gentlewoman they know.

My little Tale is done. Injudicious charity begets what is evil; judicious charity is followed by what is good. Blessings are with us when we give bread and knowledge to the young; we may garner up, though we suspect it not, faith and love for our declining years.

THE END.

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